Venus™

For People of African Descent In The Life

EXCLUSIVE
10 Men You need to know!

Ann Nesby

Here For You!

Vol. 3 No.1 1997 $2.95 USA
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KING WEEK Marching Black & Gay in America

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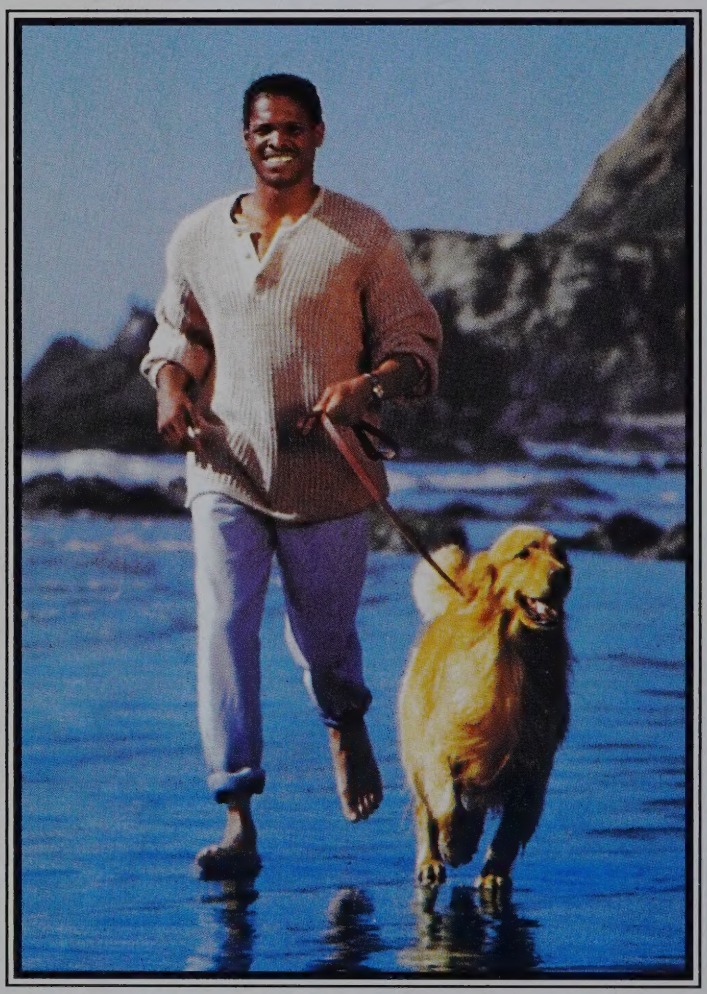
"For people like me who have AIDS, there's a nutritional product that can help us increase our energy and improve the quality of our lives."



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Venus™

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Ann Nesby-songwriter, soloist from Sound of Blackness. Photo courtesy of Prospective Records

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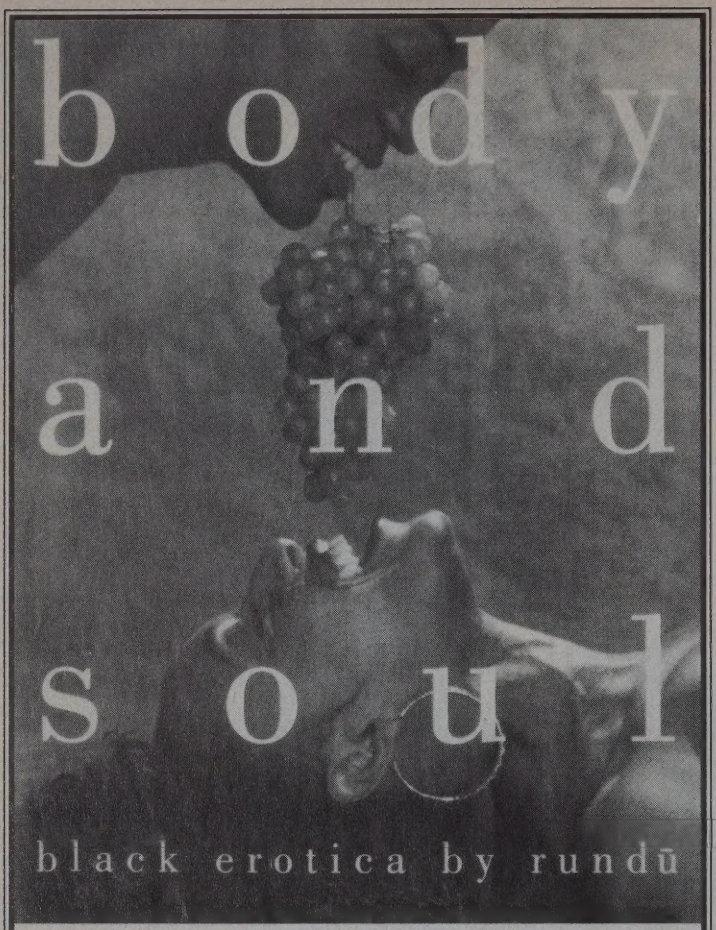
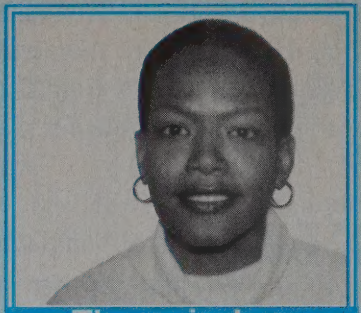


BODY AND SOUL

By Rundu Staggers

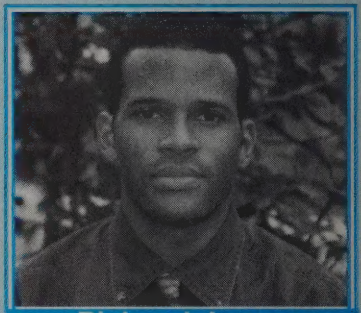
Published by Crown Publishers, 1996



Thonnia Lee

Thonnia Lee

Venus is incredibly blessed to present the writing talents of free-lance editor and consultant, Thonnia Lee. A graduate of Hampton University, she has taught freelance writing at various Universities including Emory, and Clark Atlanta . Ms. Lee is currently Assistant to the Executive Director of the National Black Arts Festival. Her work has appeared in Black Enterprise, HealthQuest, Essence and Emerge magazines.



Richard Jones

Richard Charlton-Pharris Jones

As contributing editor, Richard Jones has devoted countless hours to the excellence of this publication. A recent graduate of Morris Brown College, Bachelor of Arts-Communications and Public Relations, Mr. Jones has served as publicity coordinator for Southern Christian Leardership Conference (SCLC). Currently he is also editor-in-cheif of the Morris Brown campus paper,'The Wolferine'.

Marian Farrah

Marian Farrah

Advice columist and New York resident Marian Farrah holds a special place in the hearts of Venus readers. Her column is a favorite among men and women in the life who send numerous letters seeking answers to what ever life presents. An accomplished manager and conselor, Ms. Farrah is a graduate of the University of Warwick, Coventry, U.K. and Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

Charles Easley

Charles Easley

Photo Editor and writer, Charles Easley has been a friend of the Venus family since it's inception. Easley, a Houston,Texas native, currently teaches film editing and production at Clark Atlanta University's Mass Communications Department. He is curently working on a screenplay that will concentrate on the relationships between black gays and lesbians.

Venus

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Getting to know singer, songerwriter Ann Nesby is a joy! Of course you already know Ann by her electrifying lead vocals with Sounds of Blackness. When ever I need some serious encouragement, I reach for her voice on my extra long 'I Believe' remix CD. By the time girlfriend gets through, everyone one my block Believes! In our interview, Ann shares her excitement about writing, her family and about her new solo career. Her new CD, 'I'm Hear for You' is already a favorite among ballet music lovers.

In addition to getting to know Ann Nesby, this issue will introduce you to 10 of America's most dynamic African-American Black Gay Men. Educated, exciting, well traveled and handsome describes all of these men, although their individual interests and accomplishments are diverse. Finding interesting men to spotlight is not at all a challenge. I must admit, however, that finding well accomplished Sisters between 25-45 who are 'out' AND will allow themselves to be published is the equivalent to finding a needle threaded with silk in a hay stack. Please prove me wrong! Contact the Venus office. We'd love to spotlight YOU!

Long Beach, CA is the place to be this February as The National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum presents it's 10th Anniversary Conference. Get There! This is the one not to miss!! Check our News & Notes section for the latest details!

We know that you have a busy year planned. That's why we plan to keep you informed and entertained. Be sure to look for our Hot new Web Site this Spring. We will also introduce our latest product: the 1998 Black Gay Pride USA Pocket Guide. You'll hold in the palm of your hand every National event schedule by People of African Descent in the Life. Advanced to our subscribers first, the '98 Pocket Guide will be available free of charge at all Pride event,conferences,Health Fairs, etc.

Remember, no matter where your schedule takes you this year, tell your friends about Venus! Ask for us! Look for us! We'll be there!

Charlene
Publisher

10 men you need to know!

Mario Cooper

Lisa Berg

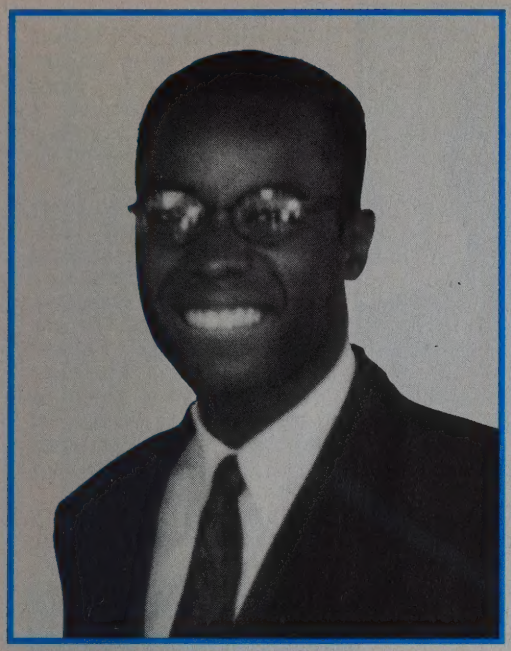
is currently a freelance public relations consultant. Recent projects have included, assisting one of the Nation's largest publishing firms in exploring new and emerging technologies in multimedia and cable broadcasting, strategic marketing planning for a new product campaign, and development of social marketing programs for a variety of companies and public policy organizations concerning public health policies.

For over a decade, Mr. Cooper has represented cities, major corporations, and foreign governments before the United States Congress, state, local and federal administrative agencies. He has practiced law and public relations, with a focus on public policy issues and strategic media planning.

Mr. Cooper served as Manager of the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Appointed by the late Ron Brown, Mr. Cooper oversaw the day-to-day operations of the Convention and developed the strategic media plans for the Convention.

He has served as Deputy Cheif-of Staff of the Democratic Committee. During President Jimmy Carter's administration, Mr. Cooper was a staff assistant to the President in the White House Scheduling Office, where he was responsible for coordinating Presidential visits abroad and domestically.

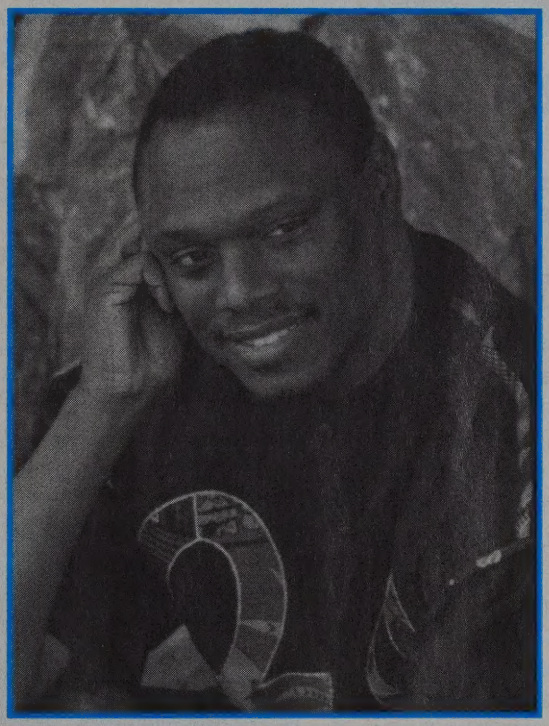
A native of Mobile, Alabama, Mr. Cooper is a member of the International Advisory Board of the Harvard AIDS Institute, a member of the Advisory Board of University of California at San Francisco's Center for AIDS Prevention, a member of the Board of Gay Men's Health Crisis and a Member of the Pennsylvania and District of Columbia Bars.



Rodney Gooden

Boston's Rodney Gooden is a graduate of the University of San Francisco (USF). He is Media Coordinator for publishing giant Addison-Wesley Longman where he works closely with many functional areas within the company including editorial, design, production, product management, marketing and inventory. Mr. Gooden is the recent recipient of the Employee Recognition Award for Individual Contribution in the Addison-Wesley School Division.

Cleo Manago



Self described activist, writer, instructor, musician, social architect, Cleo Manago is founder of the Black Men's Exchange (BMX), an "Africentric" national communications clearinghouse and support system for the empowerment of Black men of diverse sexual expression. He is also founder of African-American AIDS Support Services & Survival Institute, Inc. (AMASSI). Two centers located in Los Angeles (1993) and Oakland (1990) are full service non-profit ,agencies providing emotional support, counseling and health education services to couples, individuals and families diverse in sexuality and expression.

Cleo's writings have appeared in several publications including Essence, The Black Scholar, SBC and Alternatives magazines. Cleo was also published in the Million Man March book entitled Atonement. Currently an Integral Studies doctoral student at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, Cleo elected not to call BMX a 'gay' organization but an organization for Black men who love men, for same-gender-loving brothers. He firmly states, "we must stop riding the disrespectful, racist apron strings of the white gay community and acknowledge that we have a unique history and legacy- that is Black in essence, not German (via the pink triangle or white (via the rainbow flag)." em:BlkMensXX@aol.com for info.

AFRICAN AMERICAN OUTREACH

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AND EDUCATION TO ALL AFRICAN AMERICANS AND FOSTER MORE LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THOSE INFECTED AND AFFECTED!

AID Atlanta

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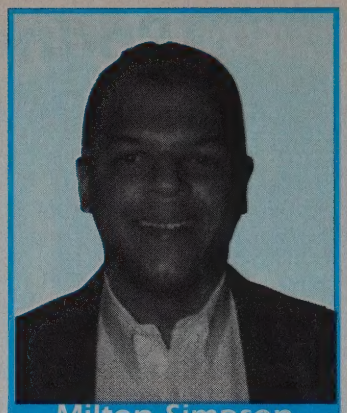
Atlanta, GA 30309

H. Alexander Robinson

who turned 40 this year, describes himself as an "openly gay African-American husband and father." He has been living with HIV since 1983 and has been in a long -term relationship with his partner Robert since 1988.

In 1991 Alexander joined the American Civil Liberties Union where his work received national attention. As representative of the ACLU's AIDS and Gay and Lesbian Rights Projects, he testified before several congressional committees, made numerous national television appearances on a wide range of issues including health care reform, lesbian and gay rights, the rights of people with disabilities, housing and the rights of people living with HIV disease and AIDS.

A native of Richmond, Virginia, Alexander was awarded a B.A. in accounting and political science from Pennsylvania State University, and received his MBA from Stanford University. An articulate and outspoken advocate for people with AIDS Alexander introduced President Bill Clinton on World AIDS Day 1992 on the occasion of the President's first national speech on AIDS. He was later appointed by President Clinton to serve as a member of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS where he currently chairs the Prevention Subcommittee. When asked about why he does this work Alexander was quick to respond, "As a parent of an 18 year old son, hope is what I can offer him for his future. That is my commitment and my charge." As for his legacy, "that I lived life to the fullest with honor, courage and dignity, and that I encouraged others to do the same."



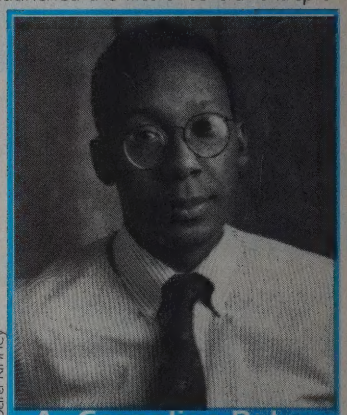
Milton Simpson

Milton Simpson

"I knew I was black before I knew I was gay," notes Milton Simpson, president of Atlanta based Forward Communications, Inc. "It never occurred to me that being openly gay would prevent me from owning a business."

The former co-host of an Emmy Award winning variety show, Milton develops creative marketing solutions and special events for a diverse client base, including: Dance Theater of Harlem, Morehouse College, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and others. Currently Milton is producing "Challenge Hate in America," for the Center for Democratic Renewal, the organization that first reported the rash of Black Church burnings in the South.

A graduate of The John Hopkins University, Milton started his career as development director and teacher at his high school alma mater in south Los Angeles. A few years later, he launched the first of several entrepreneurial endeavors and hopes one day to contribute a million dollars to his inner-city high school.



Barbara Kinney

A. Cornelius Baker

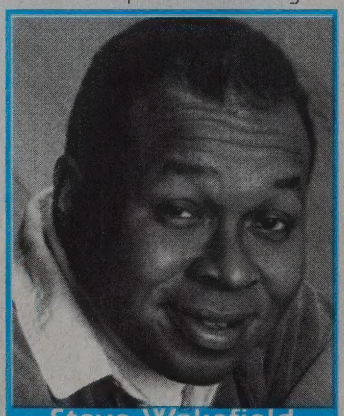
A. Cornelius Baker

a native of central New York, is Executive Director of the National Association of People with AIDS(NAPWA) where he is responsible for the organization's administration and development.

He is also the Chief Executive Officer of NAPWA Services, Inc. which operates MedExpress, a mail order pharmacy specializing in HIV care. His work at NAPWA has included serving as consultant to the CDC, member of the Technical Advisory Committee for the Gay and Bisexual Men of Color Prevention Needs Assessment, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Mr. Baker has served as a Bush Administration appointee where he acted as External Liaison Officer and as Confidential Assistant to the Secretary of Health, national AIDS Program Office(NAPO), U.S. Department of Human Services.

He is also a board member for Washington DC's Whitman-Walker Clinic, president of the Brother Help Thyself Foundation of DC/Baltimore and was the 1993 recipient of the Courage Award at the Washington AIDSWalk for outstanding leadership in living with HIV disease.

Mr. Baker believes that "faith as an instrument of strength and endurance is at the core of our existence. We must as thoughtful, loving people do everything in our power to end the suffering that AIDS has caused. And as gay men we must all be engaged in this struggle."

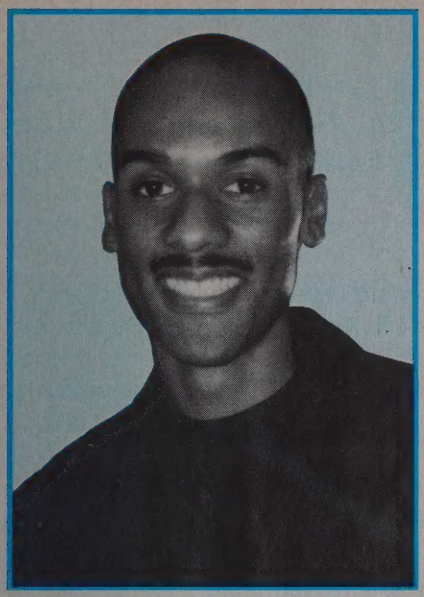


Larry Lapious

Steve Wakefield

Steve Wakefield

Steve is Associate Director of Operations of The Night Ministry, an organization created out of diverse religious traditions which builds relationships with persons of the nighttime streets to empower them to meet their own needs. A native Chicagoan, Steve serves as an openly Gay member of the City of Chicago Board of Health, the Chicago/Cook County Ambulatory Care Council, The Partnership to End Homelessness(Youth Committee), and the United Way Health Needs Assessment Committee. Nationally, Steve is currently Chair of the National Institute for Health(NIH) Community Advisory Board for Vaccine Development, and secretary for the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention.

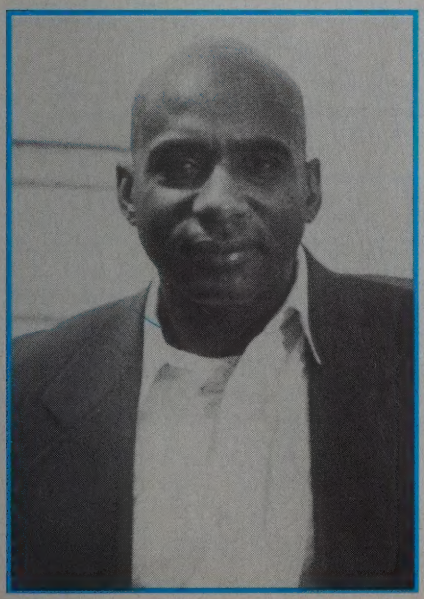


Keith Boykin

has recently published a nonfiction book titled One More River to Cross: Black & Gay in America (Doubleday/Anchor 1996). Keith received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Dartmouth College, and is also a graduate of Harvard Law School. He has been involved in several congressional campaigns and in two national presidential campaigns. He drafted President's Clinton's statement on the 1993 Gay & Lesbian March on Washington and the President's letter opposing anti-gay ballot initiatives circulating in several states. Mr. Boykin is currently Executive Director of the National Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, and has opened a Washington DC of the Forum.

Dr. C. Cordell Adams

One of Dallas' new and esteemed ophthalmologist and ophthalmic surgeons, Dr. Cordell Adams relocated four years ago from Los Angeles' renowned Jules Stein Eye Institute of the Department of Ophthalmology at UCLA where he wrote extensively on Management of Difficult Glaucoma. Having been accepted into medical school at ripe age of 20, he graduated Summa Cum Laude from Southern Oklahoma State University School of Chemistry. He now serves on the boards of Dallas Black Dance Theater, Dallas Services for the Visually Impaired, HRC Federal Club, and Dallas' Turtle Creek Chorale. Cordell has rekindled his love for theatrical arts with several commercial appearances. He vows, "I am a living testimony that with God's will, hard work, and determination, one's dream can be achieved."



Cary Alan Johnson

Johnson, 35, is Executive Director of Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD), an advocacy, support and HIV service organization in it's eleventh anniversary year. An accomplished author and activist, Johnson received his B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College and a Master of International Affairs, Certificate in African Studies, from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Johnson has served successfully in numerous national and international leadership positions; he was the Country Representative with Africare, in Kigali, Rwanda; he worked with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, in Bukavau, Zaire, and as Regional Director for Amnesty International (AI) in Washington, D.C. "It is good to be back where I began," Johnson asserts. "I am very proud to have been selected to lead GMAD into its next decade of service to our community."

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AIDS WATCH

A new column by Steve Wakefield

1996 was a year of new attitudes about HIV/AIDS. Some of the scientific information has given new hope, while the continued disproportionate representation of Blacks and Latinos infected by HIV/AIDS is disheartening. This column will attempt to provide Venus readers with news and views that may not always be on the front page of our local papers. The primary goal is to make sure you have a chance to focus on research updates and opportunities.

Resistance to HIV Discovered in Group of Kenyan Prostitutes

A group of prostitutes in Nairobi appears to be resistant to HIV infection, Kenyan and Canadian doctors report in the journal The Lancet. The women did not appear to have the same genetic mutation that protects some Caucasians from infection, however. Francis Plummer and colleagues at the University of Manitoba reported that, of the 424 prostitutes participating in the study, all were found to be free of HIV infection when the study began in 1985. During the 10-year study, 239 of the women seroconverted and most of the others became infected to some degree. However, despite repeated exposures, 43 of the women never became infected. [Washington Times (11/15/96) P. A18]

Glaxo Welcomes Testing New "Better than AZT" Drug

The Wall Street Journal published an article on 1592U89, usually called 1592, an experimental nucleoside analog drug (in the same class as AZT). In "Why Isn't Glaxo's New AIDS Drug Ready Yet," WST writer Michael Waldholz asks why 1592 has been in research much longer than other new AIDS drugs but is not expected to be marketed until almost two years from now, and is not being made available through expanded access for those with no other treatment options.

Like most clinical trials there are strict inclusion and exclusion criteria which will limit the number of persons who have access to the new treatment which under certain conditions demonstrates as much antiretroviral activity as other drugs when used in combination. For example, anyone who has used a protease inhibitor, or a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (e.g. nevirapine) is ineligible. But there are two studies being conducted in 13 cities. For information, call 1-800-TRIALS-A. ▼

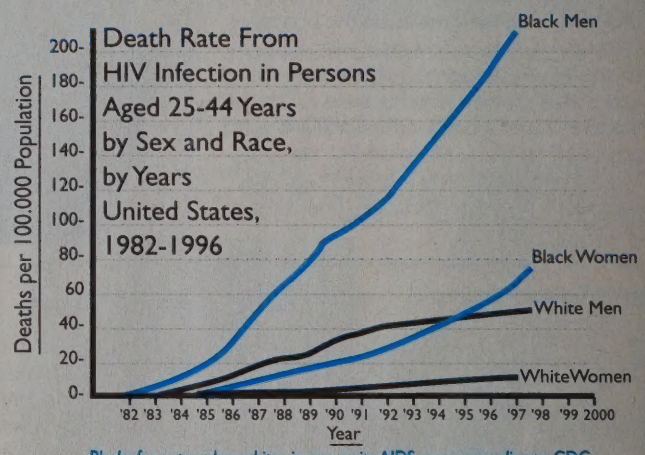
HARVARD RESPONDS TO THE NATIONAL AIDS CRISIS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

Up to Half a Million African-Americans Are Already Infected with HIV.

More than 100 of the nation's African-American leaders gathered at Harvard University recently to launch a campaign against AIDS among African-Americans. The Leading for Life summit was convened in response to the continued dramatic rise in AIDS cases among African-Americans; according to a recent Harvard AIDS Institute projection, in less than four years, more than half of all AIDS cases in the United States will be among African-Americans.

The summit, sponsored by the Harvard AIDS Institute and held on October 22, 1996 convened leaders in academia, business, entertainment, law, the media, medicine, politics, religion, and sports to raise awareness nationally and to develop a national follow-up campaign. "By the year 2000, an African-American will be nine times more likely to have an AIDS diagnosis than a non-African-American," said Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, Jr., Director of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard University. Among those attending the summit were Marion Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund; Patsy Fleming, Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy; Alexis Herman, assistant to the President of the United States; Dr. David Satcher, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

"We have come to renew our commitment to fight the spread of the HIV virus and to care for those who are living with AIDS," Edelman said. "We have come to advocate for the needs of our people who are affected by AIDS. And we have also come to a call for action."



Blacks far outnumber whites in per capita AIDS cases, according to CDC.

"This is an historic gathering, and a call to arms against a disease that is ravaging our community," Gates said. He compared the AIDS epidemic to the Vietnam War. "AIDS is our generation's war," he said. "Each one of us knows the victims of this dreaded disease. More than a dozen of my intimate friends have died of AIDS, and many more are HIV positive. And like the war, a disproportionate number of people infected with HIV and those who have succumbed to AIDS are African-American." "AIDS is

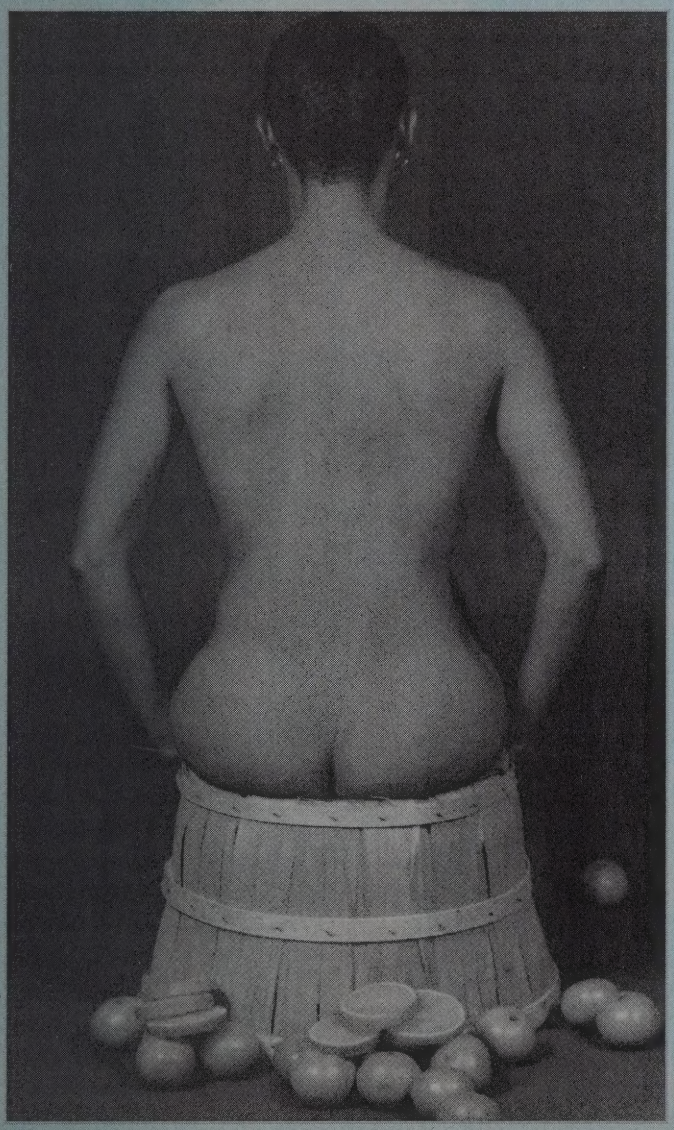
already devastating and decimating the black community," said Dr. Poussaint, who helped spearhead the summit.The epidemiologic picture that emerged during the summit was grim: as many as 500,000 African-Americans are already infected with HIV: AIDS kills twice as many African-American men aged 25 to 44 as homicide; African-American women constitute two-thirds of all HIV-infected women who are reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and more children with AIDS are African-American than all races and ethnic groups combined. "This summit served as a catalyst for African-American leaders, and we plan to hold them accountable," said Mario Cooper, a member of the Harvard AIDS Institute's International Advisory Council.

> **"This summit served as a catalyst for African-American leaders, and we plan to hold them accountable," said Mario Cooper."**

The indiÅvidual participants approved a Call for Action that urges all African-American leaders and federal, state, and local government officials to "support, develop, and enhance community-based program's for education, care, and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Among its other statements, the document appealed "to the President of the United States to convene an emergency meeting of the appropriate cabinet-level officials and community leaders to address AIDS within African-American communities."

The Harvard AIDS Institute co-sponsored the summit along with the National Minority AIDS Council; the Balm in Gilead, Inc. and the W.E.B. Dubois Institute for African-American research at Harvard University. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-profit, independent national health care philanthropy based in Menlo Park, California - provided primary funding for the campaign. Additional support was pr ovided by the American express Company; the Charles Hotel; Glaxo Wellcome Inc.; Merck & Co., Inc.; and the Metropolitan Life Foundation.The Harvard AIDS Institute is a university-wide organization that conducts and catalyzes research to end the worldwide AIDS epidemic. ▼

Slowing Down by Fasting



Rundu / Body & Soul

You are what you eat!

What you put into your body contributes to the way it functions, or in some cases, its malfunction. Being aware of how your body operates is essential for good health. Learning what and how to eat can help you develop a healthy body.

Much has been written about how to attain good health recently, but few books actually mention the benefits of fasting. Fasting is a scientific method that allows your body to heal itself. It can be practiced complimentary to your personal lifestyle. It's inexpensive and, under the supervision of a doctor, fasting can be conducted safely and effectively.

Remember it's important to note fasting is not starving yourself. It's a process which allows your body a physiological rest. Think of it as a day or two off for your stomach.

Many foods we eat are treated with toxic chemicals. Our bodies cannot process these toxins. Some become apart of our bodies, and can cause serious illness. Without a way to flush out these toxins, our bodies become warehouses for waste. Our resistance to illness is weakened. We get sick more frequently.

According to experts, fasting can help strengthen your immune system. Other benefits may include weight loss, improved eating habits and lower cholesterol and blood-pressure levels.

However, as simple as it may seem, fasting should not be attempted without some preliminary research. Nutritionist Dick Gregory's Dick Gregory's Natural Diet for Folks Who Eat: Cookin' With Mother Nature, is good place to begin. It includes a chapter called "Fasting: Mother Nature's Mr. Clean," where Gregory talks candidly about his experiences. Another book, The Miracle of Fasting, by Paul C. Bragg, explains fasting from a spiritual and physiological viewpoint. And of course, one should always seek the professional advice of a doctor or nutritionist.

So do yourself a favor. Find out more about fasting and its benefits. It just may be your way to a healthier you.▼

Steven Fullwood

ANN NESBY

I'm Here for You!

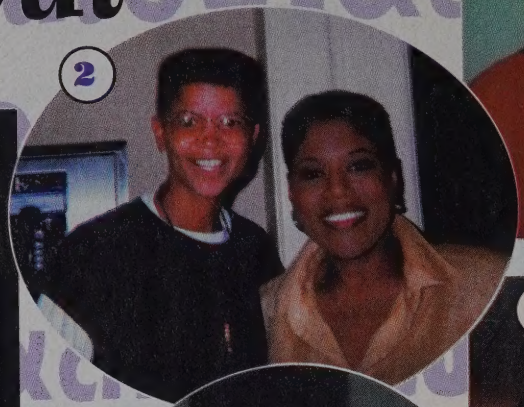
For years, Ann Nesby's powerful voice belted out the lead vocals for the 'Sounds of Blackness.' That may have been her mega-celebrity introduction, but the depth and talent of this soul diva stretches beyond any light-weight pop star in passing. On hiatus from the group, Nesby's first solo album 'I'm Here For You,' is a sparkling portfolio of what the Minneapolis resident can do.

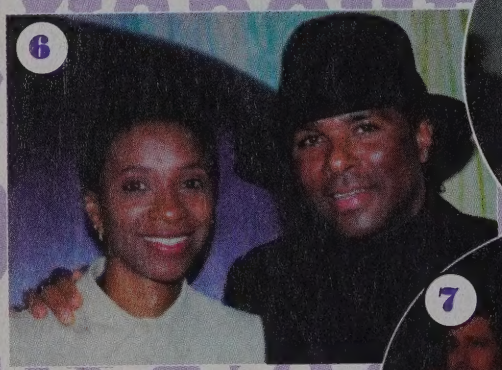
It also appears to offer insight into Nesby's personality. The native of Joilet, Ill., Nesby co-wrote all of the songs but the title track. The variety expands what she spun out in 'Optimistic,' 'Testify,' and 'I Believe,' all with Sounds, and takes her through a series of uptempo, ballad, and inspirational cuts that show a full range of vocal and lyrical ability.

Continued on page 20

BY THONNIA LEE

out&about





1. At last year's National Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum Steve Oxendine (l) presents award to Steve Wakefield for his extraordinary work as founder of Chicago's Night Ministry. **2.** Detroit's Dr. Kofi Adomi (l) and San Diego author Joan Fountain are all smiles in Atlanta for Black Gay Pride. **3.** Atlanta Lamda Center's Alicia Bristow (l) at Center's Opening with author/activist Torie Osborn . **4.** New York's Dr. Marjorie Hill gets her 'Amen' in during a Unity Fellowship service held in DC. **5.** Venus publisher. Charlene Cothran (r) presents 'Honorary Lesbian Award' to Andreas Goree (c) during the Atlanta's Annual Womens' Ice Breaker.
The 5th anniversary of the Marlan Hotel took place on North Miamai Beach Thanksgiving weekend where the Venus staff met **(6)** Miami Vice's Phillip Michael Thomas and guest; **(7)** Italian clothing designer, Valentino; **(8)** Island Records and hotel owner Chris Blackwell (l) with Jamaican artist Frankie Wilmot; and **(9)** The Florida Entertainment Commision's Nora Rojas (r) with her gorgeous life partner Noemi Rojas. **10.** (l tor) NBLGLF's Russell Thornhill, Ruth Waters, Essence Exec. Editor Linda Villarosa, and activist Mandy Carter.

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Patti's Chatty, Catty Tell-All Saga

LaBelle Shows Her Slip in Autobiography

By Steve Langley

Patti LaBelle has thrilled audiences for more than 30 years with her Holy Ghost, hell-raising rock and soul concerts and recordings. Now, with Laura Randolph, she has rolled her experiences into one big confessional titled "Don't Block the Blessings: Revelations of a Lifetime." (Riverhead Books, 305 pgs., ill.)

LaBelle dishes the dirt on celebrities who have dissed her on her way up: Diana Ross, Al Green, Dionne Warwick and the late Jackie Wilson — juicy tidbits that undoubtedly will boost sales.

For her Lesbian and Gay fans, LaBelle really pees. She writes of the early 1970s, when the reinvented, outrageous Labelle, with Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash, attracted a Gay male following in New York's Greenwich Village. And it was Nona Hendryx, the group's songwriter, who brought the issue of sexuality to a personal level when, according to LaBelle, Hendryx told her: "I like appealing to both men and women. I have no preferences. I don't limit myself. I'm all sexes. I don't know what a heterosexual or a homosexual or a bisexual or a monosexual is. I don't understand the differences."

"Personally," LaBelle writes, "I didn't have a problem with any of that. I judge people by who they are and not who they love, which is what I told Nona the day she told me her relationship with a member of our entourage was more than professional."

What the book doesn't disclose is that rumors were rampant that not only was Labelle a Lesbian group but also that the singer were sexually involved with each other. These rumors unsettled Patti, an avowed heterosexual wife and mother who wanted to sing traditional R&B ballads rather than the adventurous rock and soul songs that intrigued the group's cult following. Such differences led to the group's breakup in December 1976, and LaBelle pulled herself up by her hip boots and eventually found superstardom as a soloist. Her saga proves that, despite obstacles and tragedies, there are plenty of blessings in a pot of gold somewhere over the rainbow.

The reviewer is a singer-songwriter and playwright.

VenusLibraryList

One More River to Cross ▪ Keith Boykin (Double Day, 1996)
This Too Shall Pass ▪ E.Lynn Harris (Double Day, 1996)
Second Time Around ▪ James Earl Hardy(Alyson 1996)
Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood ▪ bell hooks (Henry Holt & Co.1996)
Joycelyn Elders M.D. ▪ Dr. Joycelyn Elders and David Chanoff (William Morrow, 1996)
PUSH ▪ Saffire(Random House, 1996)
Race Matters ▪ Dr. Cornel West (Random House, 1996)
Benned ▪ Alice Walker(Ingram, 1996)
Race Rules ▪ Michael Eric Dyson(Addison-Wesley, 1996)
Speaking in Whispers ▪ Cathlene Morris (Third Side Press, 1996)
Faith in the Valley ▪ Iyanla Vanzant (Simon &Shuster, 1996)

VenusQuikViews

BODY & SOUL

Rundu Staggers(Crown, 1996)

From this award-winning photographer a gorgeous Photographic celebration of erotic affection among African-Americans. Enhancing the mood of the photographs are a dozen classic black love poems by such poets as Maya Angelou. Staggers published her first "Men...Rundu Style" calendar as her thesis project at the University of Texas at Dallas.

The calendar continues each year to win numerous awards including the bronze award in world competition from the Calendar Marketing Association.

Good Girl, Bad Girl

Kevin Ammons(Carol, 1996)

This Tell-All book is the unauthorized biography of Whitney Houston by her former body guard. Ammons reveals private encounters between Whitney, gal pal Robin, and husband Bobby Brown.

The Good Book

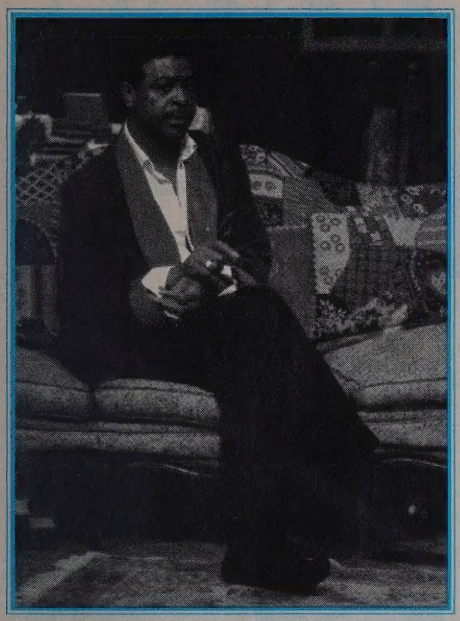
Peter Gumes (William Morrow, 1996)

An African-American openly gay Harvard professor and conservative republican Baptist minister devotes a chapter in his book to homosexuality and biblical interpretations.

Nothing Bad Happens Ever

Joan Fountain (Gold Leaf Press, 1996)

Now a professional trainer and top consultant to fortune 500 companies Fountain reveals her personal triumph over addition to food, alcohol and drugs. Once at 420 lbs., Fountain appeared on Oprah, Sally Jesse Raphael, and Montel Williams.



Dissin' the Oppressed

Candid Stage Characters Toss Political Correctness to the Wind

In "Conversation with a Diva," a play about an African American Gay man's odyssey to find his identity, Sir Damone, the play's only character, recounts the time he met a White man who became one of Sir Damone's many sexual conquests.

"It was raining that night, so you know he smelled like a little puppy."

Some in the predominately male, integrated audience at the sold-out March premiere at the Church Street Theater in Washington snickered. Others squirmed.

Sir Damone repeatedly describes his "date" as a "white boy," a Brit who, as it turns out, wants an S&M encounter, much to Sir Damone's displeasure. Sir Damone further implies that the encounter rendered him HIV positive. "He didn't feel right or taste right," he says. "And I got the test results back to prove it."

And a sexual encounter with a girl convinced Sir Damone of one thing: "I don't want no more fish."

In "Metamorphosis," a similar one-man play that was performed at the Market 5 Gallery in Washington in October, Randye describes the AIDS virus as "that bitch."

Both plays were written by openly Gay African Americans. But can or should these writers and their more well-known peers be held accountable for their characters' brazen comments? Or are the writers merely creating characters who are real people — full of all the prejudices and potential of real people? If the latter is true, when does verisimilitude become crude?

These two writers provide some answers. When asked during a question-and-answer session whether his female personification of AIDS created any flak, Michael Develle Winn, a 26-year-old Philadelphian who wrote and stars as Randye, said many theatergoers had questioned him about the usage. He said he interviewed more than 100 Black Gay men and extensively researched issues such as AIDS and the Robert Maplethorpe controversy before writing his play. And in the final analysis, sounding much like the outspoken tranvestite he had just finished playing, he said, "Nobody tells me what to write."

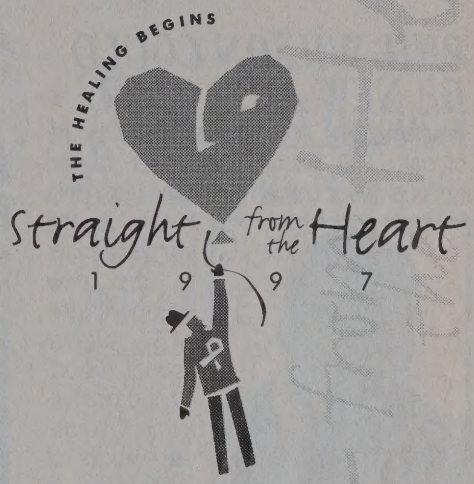
At a similar session, Shirlene Holmes, an associate professor of communications at Georgia State University in Atlanta who wrote "Conversation," was less blunt.

She says Sir Damone, performed by Michael Sainte-Andress, an openly Gay and HIV-positive Washington actor, is a real person she met and befriended several years ago in Atlanta. "These are his words. I wanted to tell his story without being judgemental," she says.

She adds: "I'm not trying to

Continued on page 21

directed & choreographed by
Karen Beyer
written by
Jim Knoll with the cast
musical direction by
Sally Priester
executive producer
Ken Anderson



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NEWS&NOTES

GET THE 411

PHIL WILSON COULD BE NEW AIDS CZAR

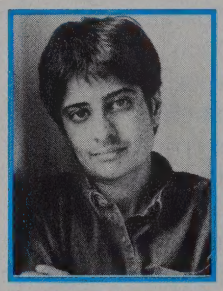
Washington- According to White House officials, Phil Wilson, co-founder of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, is the top contender as the new director of the AIDS Policy Council. Wilson, 40 and originally from Chicago, was director of public policy at AIDS Project Los Angeles. Other possible candidates for the position include Pat Christen, director of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation; Michael Isbell, director of Gay Mens' Health Crisis in New York and Jim Graham, Executive Director of Washington D.C.'s Whitman-Walker Clinic. Response to the speculation about the candidates has been mixed. While the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has applauded Phil Wilson, other groups, such as ACT UP/DC have expressed the need for someone of "higher prominence"

Lambda Elects New Atlanta Board

Atlanta — Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the national organization committed to achieving the full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, and people with HIV/AIDS through impact litigation, education and public policy work, has elected four new Board members. Joan P. Garner, Harry H. Harkins, Jr., John Jewett, and Susan Levy, all active members of the Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia will assist the New York based Legal organization with opening an Atlanta office by June 1997.

AUDRE LORDE PROJECT OPENS

New York-The Audre Lorde Project is the nation's only center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirit, and Transgender People of Color communities. The grand opening was held November 15, 1996 and the speakers and performers included Urvashi Vaid, author of Virtual Reality, Doug Robinson, the first African-American gay man to be elected to the NYC School Board, The Audre Lorde Project secured and moved into its Fort Greene Home, in the Parish House of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, during the summer of 1996.



Urvashi Vaid, author of Virtual Reality

For more information, call the Audre Lorde Project: (718) 596-0342, fax (718) 596-1328, or write 85 South Oxford Street, 3rd floor, Brooklyn, NY 11217.

JESSYE NORMAN *Sings for the healing of AIDS*

New York- The Balm In Gilead, an organization devoted to mobilizing black churches held a fund raising event which brought together the extraordinary talents of Jessye Norman, Elton John, Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou. The savy and well-connected founder of The Balm In Gilead, Pernessa Seele, believes that problems associated with bringing major funding into black AIDS agencies are mirrored across the country. "This is a result of the fact that we [African-Americans] have not been at the table politically. Seele says from her New York office. "This event was the first of this magnitude by a black organization for black agencies", she continues. "The political structure of our community [the black church] has failed us", says Seele. "Gay white men mobilized long ago. They are responsible for the movement in AIDS treatment & funding agendas, but where are we?", asked a passionate and frustrated Seele. "I'm still trying to mobilize our folks and our churches. They know that a problem exits but they clearly do not understand the magnitude of the problem." By the year 2000, 50% of all AIDS cases will be within the African-American community.

Jessye Norman, International Concert and Opera Artist

Pernessa C. Seele, (center), is joined by Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former U.S. surgeon general and New York Congressman Charles Rangel

New Video for Lesbians with Cancer

Washington DC-The Mautner Project for lesbians with cancer, working in conjunction with the CDC and the YWCA/USA, is looking for articles research, curricula, workshop mod-

ules, videos or any educational materials relating to lesbian health issues. Filmmaker, Michelle Pakerson will co-produce the new video with Joan E. Biren and Susan Messina & Amelie Zurn are writing the printed materials. To reply, e-mail mautner@aol.com or The Mautner Project for lesbians with Cancer, 1707 L St. NW #1060, Washington DC 20036. Visit web site:http://www.sirius.com/~edisol/mautner/index.html.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR VISITS NEEDLE EXCHANGE SITE IN NEW YORK CITY

New York — In an unscheduled visit, Elizabeth Taylor dropped in to visit staff and clients of the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center in Manhattan. Together with hairdresser Jose Eber and Joe Spellman, the Executive Vice President for Elizabeth Arden, the actress arrived toting gift bags of hair care, perfume and beauty products for clients attending a special holiday "Day of Pampering."Elizabeth Taylor has been a long time advocate for the distribution of clean syringes to all intravenous drug users, and had raised the issue most recently when she addressed a meeting at the United Nations in December. In a powerful speech in the hall of the General Assembly, she said, "Prevention programs, that before were based on common sense,are now proven by studies, but it seems there is neither the political will nor the money to act upon them. We know, unequivocally, that the provision of clean needles to drug users will save lives. What are we waiting for?"

National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum Seats 1st Permanent Board

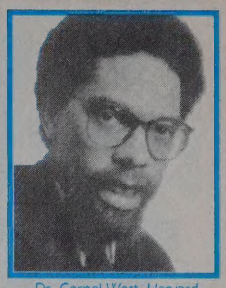
California-Members of NBLGLF's first permanent board of directors will meet in Long Beach, CA just prior with the 10th Anniversary Conference this February. Members were elected by Region with Joan Fountain (CA) and Stephen Oxendine (CA) serving at large. The newly elected Board of Directors are Ronald Johnson (NY), Willa Taylor (NY), Sonya Shields (DC), Joy C. Barnes (GA), Mark Columb (MS), Charlene Cothran (GA), Michael C. Piper (MI), Rhonda Mundhenk (IL), Renae Ogletree (IL), Steve Walker (TX), Debra Rose (CO), Brenda J. Crawford (CA), Sherry Harris (WA), Deborah L. Johnson (CA). A seat for a board member representing Region 5, (from theDakotas to Wisconsin), still remains vacant.

ALICE WALKER *TO DELIVER FORUM KEYNOTE ADDRESS*

Los Angeles-The National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum,(NBLGLF), puts the finishing touches on plans for their largest gathering ever, "Black Lesbians and Gays : Celebrating Our Legacy", the Tenth Anniversary Conference in Long Beach, CA, February 13-17, 1997.

Pulitzer prize winning author, Alice Walker

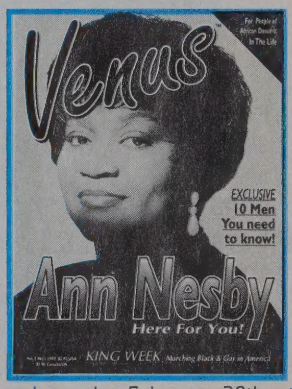
"Our selection of keynote speakers acknowledges that our legacy as Lesbians and Gays of African Descent transcends the Lesbian and Gay community," says conference co-chair Vallerie Wagner. Former surgeon general Dr. Joycelyn Elders will deliver the Opening address at the AIDS/Healthcare Institute on Thursday, Feb. 13th. Poet and playwrite June Jordan will deliver the address at the Conference Opening Ceremony on Friday evening, Feb. 14th. Pulitzer Prize winning author Alice Walker will deliver the Keynote address on Saturday morning, Feb.15th and Harvard Professor and philosopher Dr. Cornel West will give the Closing address on Sunday Feb. 16th. "This will truly be the biggest and best Conference in the herstory of the Forum and the Black Lesbian and Gay community," said conference co-chair Troy Fernandez. Contact the Forum at (213) 964-7820.



Dr. Cornel West, Harvard University Divinity School.

Venus CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY & THE JOURNEY INTO YEAR 3!

Atlanta-Venus will celebrate Black History month by presenting all volumes of the publication to the reference and research area of Atlanta's esteemed Auburn Ave. Research Library. The public is invited free of charge, but must RSVP by phone by February 28th at 404.755.8711. The ceremony & celebration will take place in the Library's auditorium on Sunday March 2, 1997 from 5pm -7pm. The theme for this year's celebration is: The Importance of Preserving African-American Lesbian & Gay History. Keynote speaker, Dr. Rudolph Byrd is director of African-American Studies at Emory University. Other invited speakers include Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and Professor Glenda Dickerson, Director of Drama and Dance at Spelman College. Atlanta's own ADODI Muse: An Outsider's Collective will perform their dynamic 'How I Got Over', followed by a reception. For addition information on other libraries around the country carrying full volumes of Venus, contact Susane Lovest at (404)755-8711.



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When she speaks of what has transpired in her life recently – including tours that have taken her from Japan to London – she is grateful humble and repeatedly thanks God for the good fortune.

"Ím feeling really blessed to have shared in the success of Sounds of Blackness and now to be part of the realization of goals of Sounds to serve as a springboard of artists with independent projects such as myself," she said. "But the most important thing to me is being who I am and telling the truth. The music is about what Ím feeling," the Minneapolis resident said recently while in New York.

> **"But the most important thing to me is being who I am and telling the truth. The music is about what I'm feeling"**

Nesby grew up in a family of singers. Her father sang in a quartet, her mother in a gospel group. Yet she considers herself a fan of all music as well as an artist.

"Gospel music is my first love," said Nesby who began singing at 3 in a Baptist church in Joilet. "I'm a firm believer that all music belongs to God. I have such a love for music that I listen to all types," she said. "Having so many young people around me, I'm exposed to a broader generation of music and I enjoy it. I don't limit myself to gospel or jazz."

She readily admits she's a fan of Country and Western: "Patsy Cline is one of my favorite artists!" But she also enjoys the sounds of Kathleen Battle, Leotyne Price, Mary J. Blige and Brandy. "Music lovers have no age attached. These are people I listen to because they inspire me. I never limit myself. Sting is also one of my favorites and I used to love James Taylor, Carol King and Barbra Streisand."

It is exposure to such different types of music that also helps Nesby write. As a member of a team of writers for Perspective Records headed by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, in 1994 she penned the Top-10 hit 'The Right Kind of Lover' for Patti LaBelle and Gladys Knight's 'Home Alone,' on the 'Just for You' album.

The mega-star producers were looking for material for LaBelle and Knight when they called on Nesby. "They're always keeping us informed of who is looking for new material. When they have offers come in and they know the style of music, they let us know. In my case, Mr. Lewis told me Patti was coming to town and asked if I had anything I wanted to give them to listen to."

"It is a tremendous blessing and is very joyful to have written for Patti and Gladys," said Nesby, whose words and tone are genuine. "To write for mentors that you've grown up listening to and to incorporate part of their style into your music is a tremendous feeling."

Songs come to Nesby while she's doing the most ordinary things. "Sometimes I can be sleeping and wake up with an idea. I'll get up in the middle of the night and write. Or, I can be in the bathroom, sitting in church, or on the airplane and have to jot the words down."

"I'm definitely inspired by God to write. I write about life things. I write about things my family and friends experience and sometimes from personal experience. I try to talk about solutions or a suggestion to end the problem I'm writing about or at least to try to talk about the situations on a positive note."

While the first song Nesby wrote, 'Lord I Need,' is featured on her new album, she is somewhat surprised by the overwhelming reaction she's found from a broad audience.

"When I started doing the album I thought it would be more adult contemporary and target women between 25 and 45," she said. "But because the album is about relationships – spiritual relationships, man's relationship with God, relationsihps between pla

tonic friends – I

Continued on page 24

Continued from page 17 defend him. But he was only 22 at the time. I'm sure he has grown as a person in the four years since I interviewed him."

Many theater-goers respond to insensitive comments about their own racial or gender group with a shrug. One white man at the Q&A session said he "was amused" by Sir Damone's wet puppy remark, which he said he had heard before "in a movie or something." He said "it is important that we hear" such attitudes.

No one challenged his assertion, which is unsurprising, given the fact that the playwright, the star and the African American female director, Stephanie Kelly, were onstage.

Holmes did say that, as a theater-goer, "there are times when you are pinched. In the world, bad things are said. But as writers we don't have to be politically correct. We need to have more perspectives."

When asked whether this meant a White writer could create a White character who says "nigger" without being labeled a racist, she laughed. "Honey, they do that all the time. Just look around. And nobody asks us what we think about it."

To be sure, the theater is filled with characters who spew a fountain of invective, some of which comes from Gay writers. Like many of his contemporaries, the late Tennesee Williams, considered America's most celebrated dramatist, peopled his award-winning works with characters who either ignore African Americans or Gay men and Lesbians or who speak of them in less-than-glowing terms.

While homosexuality was a recurring theme in his plays, few of his major characters dealt openly with the issue. Williams, who was Gay, reportedly said homosexuality was unworthy of such treatment.

Furthermore, Gay writers don't mince words when addressing political issues either. In Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic "Angels in America," Gay Republicans are depicted as selfish, venal, closeted overachievers.

To be fair, in all of these works the characters have many redeeming qualities. Winn and Holmes can be credited with writing multidimensional portrayals of effeminate Gay men who are often depicted as silly, lust-driven creatures who provide comic relief for Black heterosexual audiences, particurly in the popular Gospel musicals and "real life stage plays."

Their work has found an audience. Perhaps Gay theater is reaching a more sophisticated level of existence, in which Gay characters are not required to be wholesome goody-two shoes but are allowed to be as complex as their real-world counterparts.

Steve Langley is a singer-songwriter and playwright.
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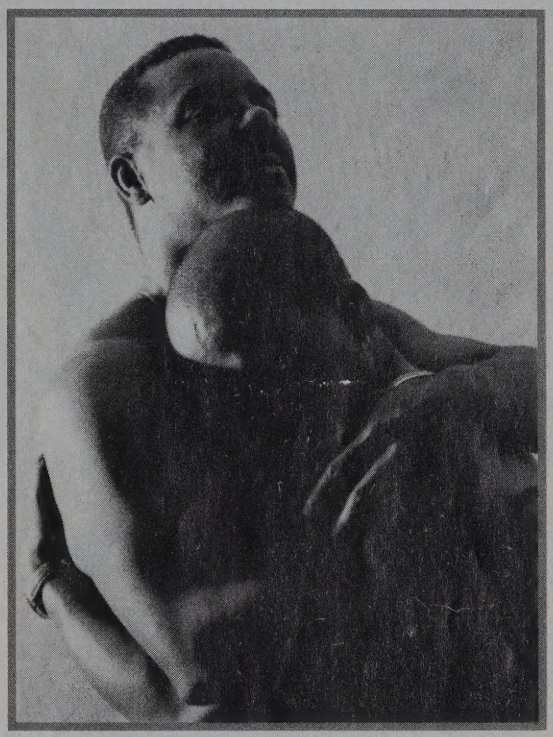

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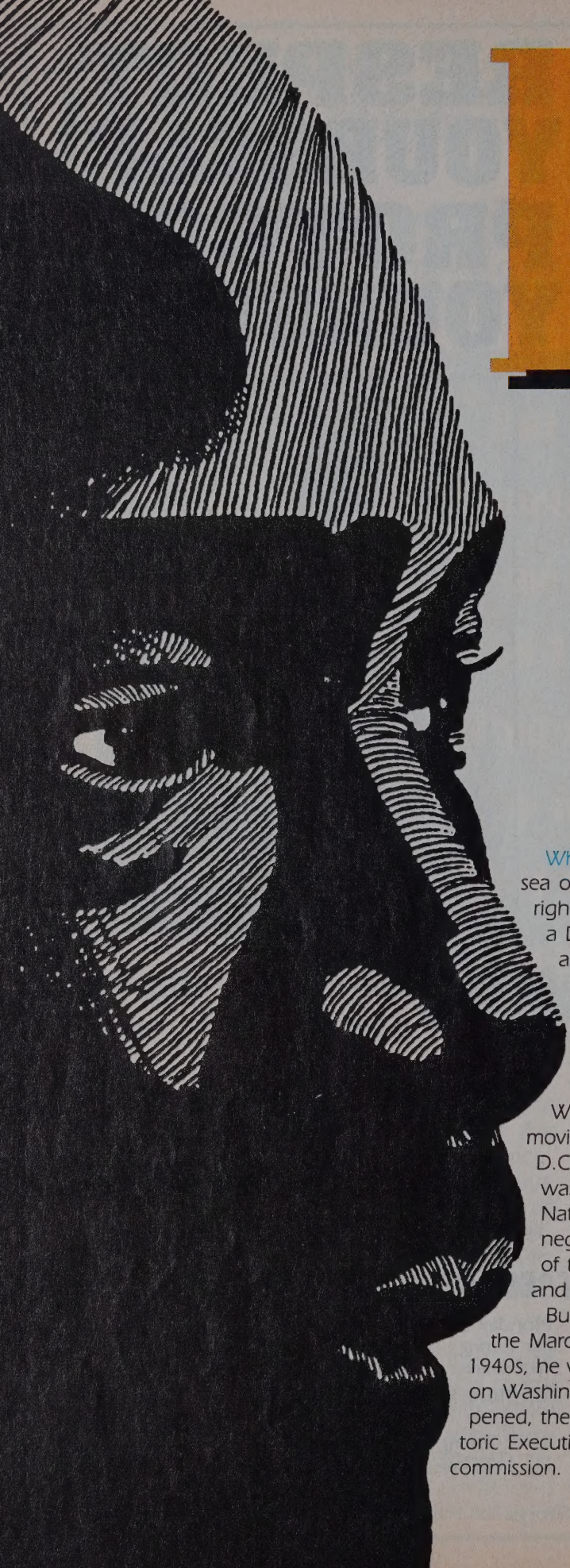


King Week

...Marching Black & Gay in America

When you mention the 1963 March on Washington, images of a sea of black faces flooding our nation's capital to stand up for civil rights and of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his famous "I Have a Dream" speech all come to mind. Relatively few people think about all the planning that had to be done to ensure that the event was a success. That's probably why when you mention the name Bayard Rustin, many people might wonder aloud "Who's Bayard Rustin?"

Bayard Rustin was the openly gay civil rights activist who served as the deputy director for the 1963 March on Washington. It was his job to plan the logistics of the event—the moving of more than 250,000 people in and out of Washington, D.C. in a single day. His selection as the chief organizer, however, was met with a bit of controversy. Whitney Young, Jr., of the National Urba«n League, and Roy Wilkins, of the NAACP, feared the negative effects which a smear campaign might have if opponents of the March focused on Bayard Rustin's key role as a prominent and visible organizer.

But Rustin had more than proven that he was capable of planning the March and his civil rights activist credits were many. In the early 1940s, he was a strong supporter of A. Phillip Randolph's call for a march on Washington to press for freedom Although that march never happened, the threat of public demonstration led to President Roosevelt's historic Executive Order 8802 which established a fair employment practice commission.

BY EGYPT FREEMAN

Black lesbians and gays led the Gay contigent joining last year's Annual King Day March, singing "We're your Sisters and your Brothers, Just like the Others!"

In the late 1940s, Rustin participated in a "freedom ride" into the South more than a decade before the well-publicized 1961 Freedom Rides. He was also an active participant in helping to organize the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, giving counsel and support to a young Dr. Martin Luther King,Jr.

Known for his incredible attenation to detail, on any given day, Rustin could cite the status of organizing efforts in cities across the nation s buses, train and airplanes were being chartered for the August 28 trip to Washington. No basic need for that day was overlooked. From logistics to emergency health care, form food and water stations to portable toilets, Rustin had every need met.

photos by E. Bennett

At the actual March, it was Rustin's task to read the goals and demands of the people to the massive crowd. As he recited the demands for a stronger federal role in civil rights, the crowd responded in roaring approval. It was his finest hour.

After the March in 1963 until his death in 1988 at the age of 75, Bayard Rustin continued to fight for civil rights in America and around the world.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that openly gay and lesbian African-Americans and people of color celebrate the legacies of Dr. King and of Bayard Rustin. In Atlanta, the birthplace of Dr. King, the Second Annual Bayard Rustin Rally was held in conjunction with the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day March. Organized by Second Sunday, Atlanta's black gay men's discussion group and Zami, Atlanta's premiere African American Lesbian organization, the event was founded by Venus Magazine and co-sponsored by Human Rights Campaign. Speakers included Keith Boykin, Executive Dir. of NBLGLF ,and Grand Marshall of the March; Rev. Deborah L. Johnson of Los Angeles; Ami Mattison of API-QXX, an Asian & Pacific Islander Queer organization for Women; Victor Stewart,

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 20

found that even children were affected when I sing the title track because it's so hard to find people that are truly in your corner."

Now that she tours the states and abroad as a solo act, the traveling experience is somewhat different than with the 30-members of Sounds. "We still have to wake at 6 a.m. and be on the air some mornings, but the great thing is that we were able to eat faster and be more relaxed. Having my family travel with me has made it easier."

Married for the last three years to manager Timothy Lee, Nesby is also quick to mention her daughter, Jameica Bennett and sister Marie Graham, who both sing background. Her 8-year-old granddaughter is featured in her new video as well. And her Godbrother 'Big Jimmy' is music director, co-writer and a producer on her CD.

"You have to have a family willing to work with you to help your success," said the mother of five. "My mother, sister and brother-in-law all play an important part in chipping in for me."

Because Nesby grew up in the church she recognizes the strength of the family, but from a spiritual and musical point of view recognizes it as a paradoxical haven for gay and lesbian talent as well.

"The gay and lesbian contribution to gospel music is enormous. They play a very important role and many times you find they are the cream of the crop and usually the best in their craft," she said.

Nesby believes in speaking out righteously and supporting others when she can. In fact, a portion of the proceeds from the title track single will go to the Minority AIDS Foundation based in Washington, D.C.

"I'm not actually trying to become a spokesperson, but I do my part in that I have family and friends who've died from AIDS. I want to do my part because it's something that affects us all." she said.

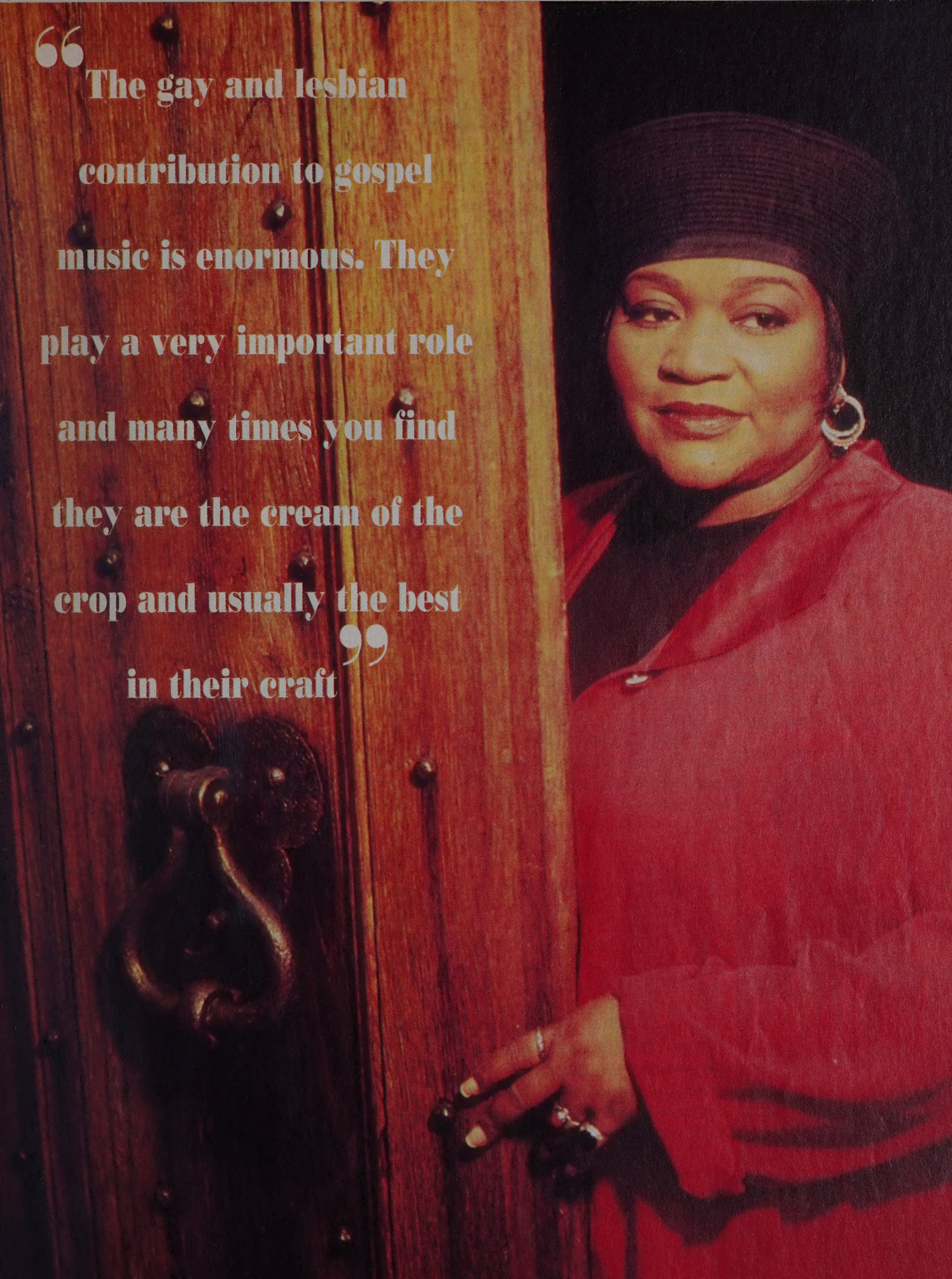
One of her favorite cuts from her album, 'I'm Here for You,' expresses that. It talks about how you have friends that say they love you but when trouble come they're sparse. Then you have those friends who are there to the end. It's unconditional love and being real and putting work with lip service and saying I love you.

> "Sometimes I can sleep and wake up with an idea. I'll get up in the middle of the night and write. Or, I can be in the bathroom, sitting in church, or on the airplane and have to jot down the words."

"In the states we are so spoiled to a degree because there is so much good music, that we kind of take it for granted. But over seas, people are so excited about hearing artists sing, and the natural ability of a singer, they're standing through the entire concert. They want to know exactly how you started, what inspires you to sing and then they study the things they say inspired you."

For Nesby, the thrill remains the creative process. "First you're writing the piece in your mind, then singing the piece, hoping to paint a picture, hoping that when you put on the finishing touches, you can lay down on canvas and capture the fullness of what you feel and see in your mind, hoping that people will get the idea and principal of what you're singing."

"But the most incredible joy is when you get compliments and they say that they were going through this certain thing and they were inspired by a song. Being able to touch the heart and mind of people to be better and do better and be encouraged and inspired, that is the most important thrill."



"The gay and lesbian contribution to gospel music is enormous. They play a very important role and many times you find they are the cream of the crop and usually the best in their craft"

Dear Marian,
I Broke up with my lover after 3 1/2 years in a stable relationship. We are now roommates and we are still intimate from time to time. However, she is now dating another woman and it infuriates me to see them together. She says that she loves me. I believe deep in her heart she wants to get back with me, but she tells me she's not ready to settle down. Do you think I have a problem because I don't want to let go?
Please help me.
Heart Ache.

Dear Heart Ache,
Love + 2 committed people = a relationship. Love + lack of commitment = no relationship. You need to remember what led you to break up after 3 1/2 years. Love didn't have anything to do with it, so love will not fix it now. The fact that you are living together is causing confusion for you and for her. You have not yet accepted that the relationship is over, and she can't let you go, even though she knows that trying it again with you won't be successful. Having sex with her will make you believe what you want to believe: "If we can be intimate, then none of this is really happening and I don't have to deal with moving on." Counseling can help you clarify what is happening now and help you define what you want for yourself in the future.

Dear Marian,
I am a 26 year old lesbian who attends medical school full-time, works part-time, and has a musical career that is about to get off the ground. In doing all this, I have a difficult time maintaining relationships with women whom I've desired. I want to know what I need to say to women when the subject of 'too little time' comes up.
No Time.

Ask Marian

If you have questions about relationships, coming out, parents, childrens or whatever life presents...

Dear No Time,
Sounds like you are clear on your priorities and you want to make something out of your life. Relationships demand alot of time and energy. Putting your career goals first is an extremely smart thing to do! Make that music and work those books. Simply dating women will enable you to have a social life and would be more realistic for you right now than starting a relationship. You are so young, you've got all the TIME in the world.

Address all letters to Ask Marian
email: venusmag1@aol.com
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Happy Birthday Pisces!

Capricorn (DEC 22 - JAN 23)
Your drive to control the direction of your life is strong. Take clear, definite steps to carry out your plans. View your choices carefully. Friends play an important role in your ability to gain greater influence. Aquarius, Libra, and Cancer are emphasized.

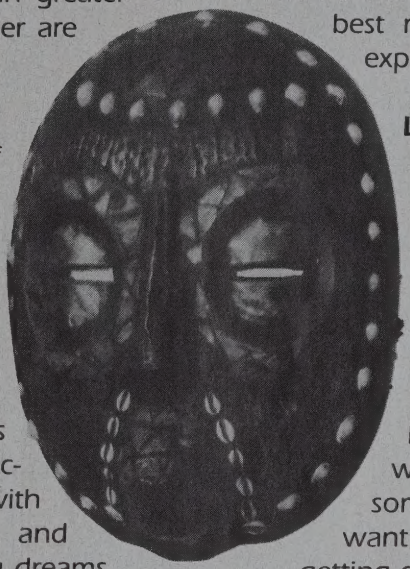
Aquarius (JAN 21 - FEB 19)
As you move toward the time of renewal, you become more confident in your ability to create the kind of life you desire for yourself. The spring seems full of promise. Go ahead and go for it.

Pisces (FEB 20 - MAR 20)
Begin the spring by setting goals which broadens your chances for success. Share your ideas and interests with those who can generate support and enthusiasm for your visions. Fulfilling dreams requires work and patience.

Aries (MAR 21 - APR 20)
You are more than happy to be just one of the gang during get-togethers. Interaction with family members foster a sense of belonging. Discuss your deepest thoughts with someone you trust.

Taurus (APR 221 - MAY 21)
Thoughts of spring finds you in a domestic mood. If possible, entertain friends or relatives at home. Last minute shopping or a bit of holiday decorating can help you and another iron-out recent tensions.

Gemini (MAY 22 - JUNE 21)
Everything comes together if you allow events to develop naturally. Take care of any unfinished business before celebrations begin. With a little help from someone with more experience, you can tackle a difficult task.


Rundu / Body & Soul

Cancer (JUNE 22 - JULY 23)
Take a break from the world and professional worries and spend time with family. Being with those who are most familiar to you would be the best way to have a wonderful time. You are your own best resource. Try to avoid extravagant expenditures.

Leo (JULY 24 - AUG 22)
Do what you can to make your royal domicile comfortable. Do not assume that everything must be lavish to be fun. If you are unattached, be ready to respond to an admirer's flirtations.

Virgo (AUG 23 - SEPT 23)
Make a fresh start. Put behind you whatever is going nowhere and try something entirely new. You might want to stay home and kick back, but getting out and about would do you some good.

Libra (SEPT 24 - OCT 23)
Conflicting signals may make you doubt a partner's sincerity. Work to eliminate attitudes that can lead to manipulation. You will not have a problem counting your blessings if you spend time with best friends.

Scorpio (OCT 24 - NOV 22)
You are in the mood and more than ready to party hearty. Now is a great time to invite a new friend (romantic or otherwise) to share the celebrations with you. Indulge yourself.

Sagittarius (NOV 23 - DEC 21)
Though you are no stranger to the concept of leisure time, you might find yourself wishing your vacation had came a little earlier. Even if you have the day off, follow up on an opportunity that presents itself.

If you know your rising sign, read it also...Wishing you all a safe and blessed spring.

tongue N groove

Queen: Body & Soul

Over two hundred African-American same gender loving women from across the country met in Atlanta to attend an open discussion exploring black lesbian sexuality. The session entitled "Butch in the Streets and Femme in the Sheets" sparked lively interaction as several sisters proclaimed or denounced the many labels defining black women who love women.

Every age group from the 20's to the 70's was represented with the former listening closely to the wise comments of the later (and vice-versa!). 'Diversity' took on a whole new meaning as many women who thought they were up on the latest, discovered terms to define sexuality among the sisters that they had neither heard of or even considered.

San Diego's Joan Fountain, author of Nothing Bad

Rundu / Body & Soul

▪Happens Ever, facilitated the gender bender. Fountain opened the session reclaiming the word 'Bulldagger' as a term first used by black lesbians of the Renaissance who enjoyed dressing in men's clothing. "We use so many code words now. There was nothing to hide behind back then. When someone said 'she's a Bulldagger' you could form a mental picture of exactly what they meant". A 41 year old New York woman stated that there weren't anymore 'real' bulldaggers. When asked what a 'real' bulldagger was, she replied "a masculine style woman who enjoys pleasing her woman but never, ever let her woman Do her." After a roar of laughter, a 34 year old femme from Los Angeles asked, "well then how does a 'real' bulldagger get any satisfaction?" A 38 year old Atlanta woman replied,"she gets the satisfaction of knowing that she just blew her mind!"

How do you define your sexuality? E-mail your comments to Venusmag1@aol.com" ▼

Bulldagger- Then: a term first used by Black lesbian in the 1920's to describe Sharp dressing Women in man's attire. Now: a lesbian who is male identified in the way she thinks, acts and dresses and Never, Ever lets her woman 'do' her.

Dyke- Although the word use to have a negative connotation, it Is now a term of endearment to describe an out lesbian who doesn't give a damn who knows it.

Old School- She's usually over 40 and enjoys the 'I'm the Man & your the Woman' roll play but also enjoys getting 'done' every now and then, and vice-versa.

Butch- a lesbian who enjoys a masculine style of dressing and manner,

Femme- She enjoys a soft, girlish & womanly style.

New wave lesbian- Can't really tell if she's butch or femme. She came out during or after the old school but no longer enjoys 'roll playing',

Lip stick lesbian- Similar to a new wave lesbian but she almost always wears makeup.

Stud- Thinks she is God's gift to women.

Action Femme- She works out often, she's physically strong and sexy, always wears sporting attire and loves the outdoors,

Pillow Princess- She's extraordinarily feminine and does No work in bed. She sometimes refuses to allow her mate to touch her–only look at her. (She is usually being well 'kept' by the poor fool.)

Flippin'- She's Femme one day & Butch the next, OR she's Butch in public but Femme In bed or vice versa.

Femme definite Top/Bottom- She's very girlish but likes it best from on top (or bottom),

VVoman loving Woman-She may or may not be closeted but definately hates being labeled in any way.

Annabes-A woman who truly thinks that she's a man, lives as a man and has girlfriends, although she does not identify as a lesbian.

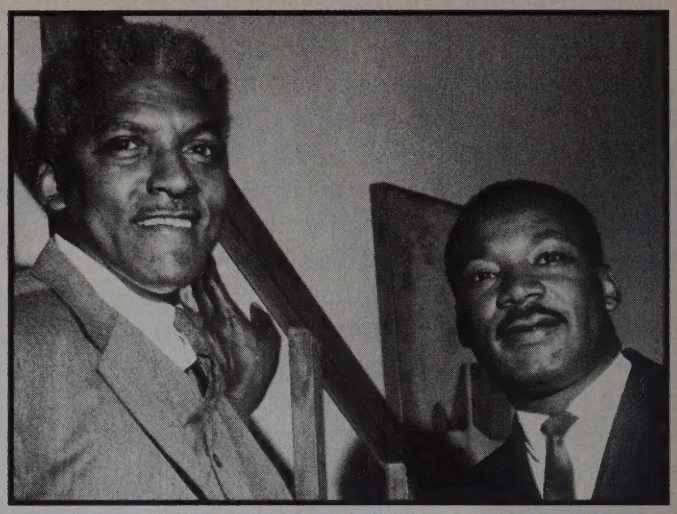
Continued from page 23

AIDS activist of Brothers Back 2 Back; Ulester Douglas, phsycotherapist and co-chair of Second Sunday, and Frances Wood, Ph.D. student at Emory's Womens Studies Program.

The Atlanta Lambda Center sponsored several showings of the award-winning documentary 'All God's Children,' during King Week. Co-produced by Dr. Sylvia Rhue and Dee Mosbacher M.D., Ph.D, the film features several prominent black gays and lesbians and members of the black clergy who discuss homophobia within the community and the black church. One of the showings was held at the meeting place of Atlanta's Concerned Black Clergy and was followed by a training session for activists desiring to work with black churches.

For over ten years New York's Lavender Light Gospel Choir has been making a joyful noise! This year Lavender Light: The Black and People of All Colors Lesbian and Gay Gospel Choir, celebrated by presenting their winter concert entitled 'No Turnin' Back' at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center. The 41-member choir, founded in 1985 is under the musical direction of Gregory Payne. The only "out" gospel choir in the nation, their first self-titled CD has sold out of it's first pressing, and to date sales continue to climb.

In Oakland,CA the AMASSI Center honored the legacy of Dr. King with a dynamic community forum entitled "Honoring Diverse Ways of Loving in The Black Community": A Dialogue on Homophobia and Liberation From Sexual and Gender Oppression. The forum created a space for the whole community to learn of, value, embrace or disagree respectfully with this aspect of the diverse Black family. Speakers included, CEO of the AMASSI Center, Cleo Manago; Tashia Asante, Deputy Director of AMASSI Center; Dr. Patricia Gay Psychologist and Behavior Scientist.



(1962) Bayard Rustin & Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the home of Dr. Arthur C. Logan

The Greater Chicago Committee's Third Annual Bayard Rustin Awards are set for Friday, February 28 at

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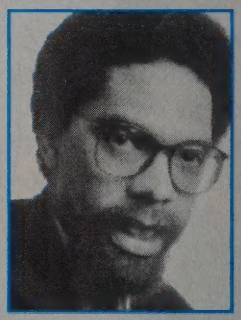

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the DuSable Museum of African-American history. The Rustin Awards honor accomplished African-American Chicagoans. The actual voting for the final winners is done by members of the African - American lesbian / gay/transgendered community. In addition, four special special awards will be given.

Alicia Bristow

Spelman College Lesbian Bisexual Alliance member at Sister's Chapel.

The President's Award going to Karen Hutt and Alma Crawford of Church of the Open Door; the Black Kettle Award to the Literary Exchange; the Board of Director's Award to Tonia Schaffer; the Founders Award to Jackie Taylor. Two new awards will be introduced this year, the Georgia Black Award will honor a member of the transgendered community as well as an award to honor a youth of the community. The ceremony will include a champagne reception and entertainment. Tickets are $20.00.

For more information call (312) 670-9660.

Edited by C. Cothran; additional information provided by Blacklines.

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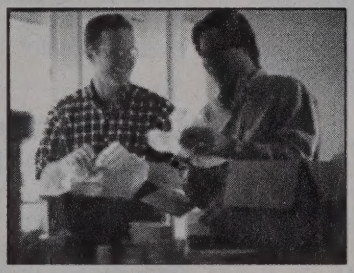

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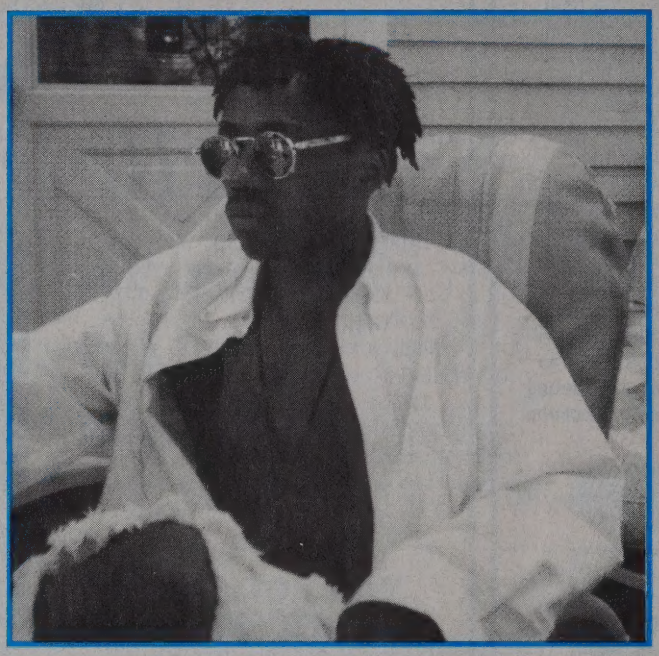
The Dark Side of the Closet

There are a multitude of reasons or excuses for hiding one's sexual identity from family and the world in general, but the most common is fear. I grew up in a devout Jehovah's Witness family where, as in most other religious households, being gay was not acceptable. Taboo. It wasn't even discussed, you just instinctively knew from all your years of study that same-sex relations were not the move.

The fear I experienced, growing up gay and an only child of a single mother, was one of exposure. My secret proclivity for the company of nubile men was not something to be confided in anyone. They just wouldn't understand, I told myself. And it was at that tender age when I slipped into the proverbial closet.



My mother never noticed this at first, she did not see me slip past the threshold into the shadows, nor did she hear the quiet little click of the door closing, ...shutting her out. Actually, neither did I.

As the years sashayed on by, I began to realize that there were key events in my life, (for example my first love), that my mother had no knowledge of, ...how could she? I never told her. I desired to on numerous occasions, but I had shut her out when I closed that door. We no longer discussed anything too deeply personal. By now she and I knew there was this obstacle between us, and I'm sure she also knew exactly what it was, ...but blissfully for us both, she chose to appear ignorant.

Keeping my life a secret from the woman who nurtured me into adulthood soon became a burden. One I hardly wanted to bear. The distance between us grew and there was not only a closet door separating us but also an endless corridor filled with all the experiences that we never shared.

This distance became most apparent when my first love, my soul mate and friend, died tragically ending our unforgettable 2 1/2 year relationship. My life, as I knew it, was over. I wanted to die also. The world suddenly seemed too cruel and cold a place without my lover and confidant by my side. And while I toyed with the idea of ending my life, my mother remained in the dark. I had shut her out too well for too long to let her in, although I needed her unconditional love then more than oxygen. Still, I deprived her of her right to be there for me out of an adolescent fear that she wouldn't. Silly, wasn't I.

Fortunately, with the help of a dear friend, I survived that gloomy period of my life. I pulled it all together again and got back in the race, for what it was worth. Through it all though, ...mother never knew.

It has taken a lot of years, some tears, and a healthy dose of introspection for me to conclude that I am ashamed. Not of my sexuality, though my actions have made it seem so, but of my weakness. I gave into fear at a young age and allowed that fear to build an emotional barricade over time between myself and the one I love most in the world. Shame on me.

Had I been honest from the start, maybe I wouldn't have felt so alone and hopeless during that crisis. I would have been able to discuss my feelings with her, to unburden myself on one who is there for that very purpose. But we can't go back and change the past, nor undo our infantile blunders but we can learn from them. I have.

We've now begun to bridge that gap that I'd so painstakingly built over the years, my mother and I, and things are better now. Although I can't help but to wonder how great our relationship might be had I never closed that door in the first place.

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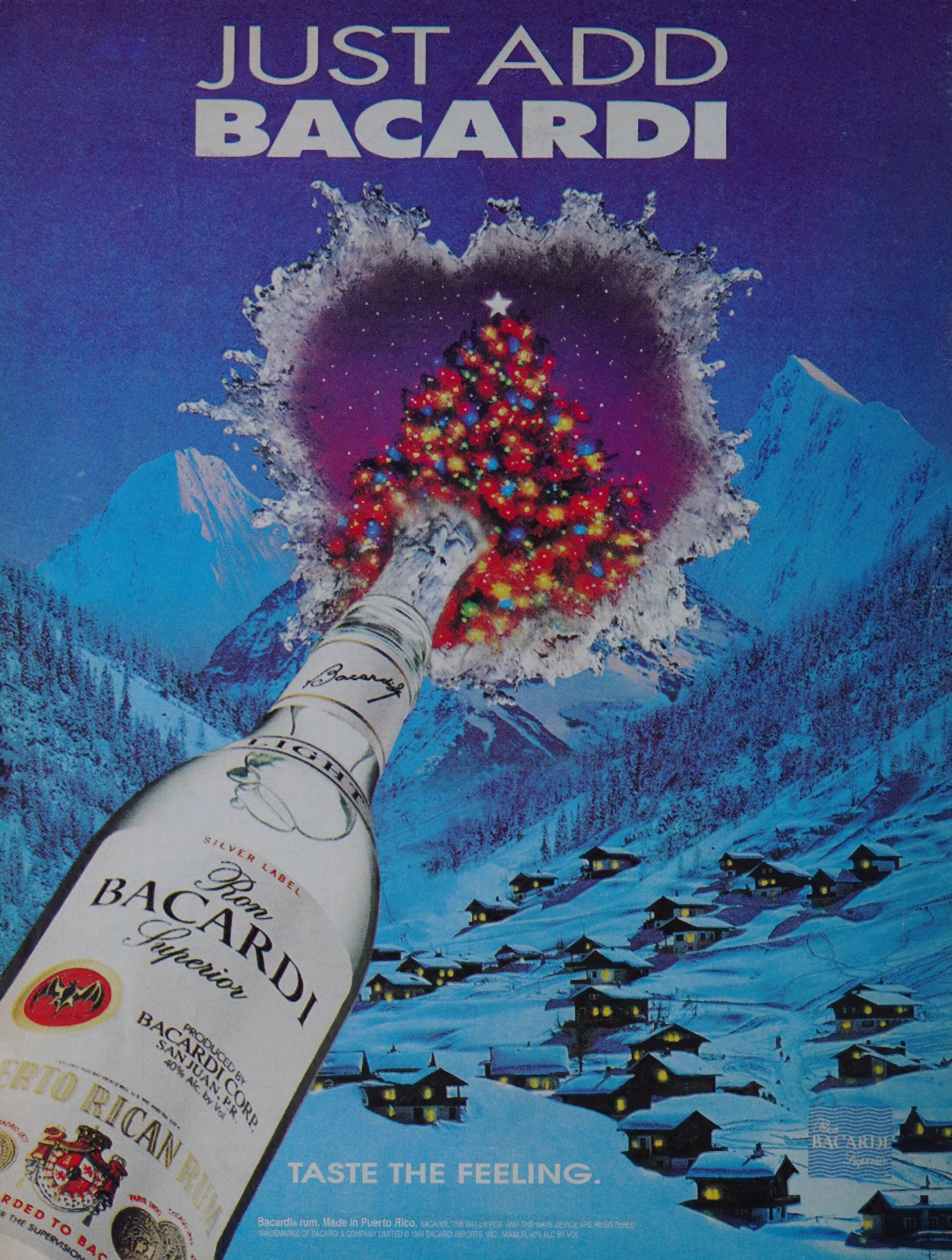
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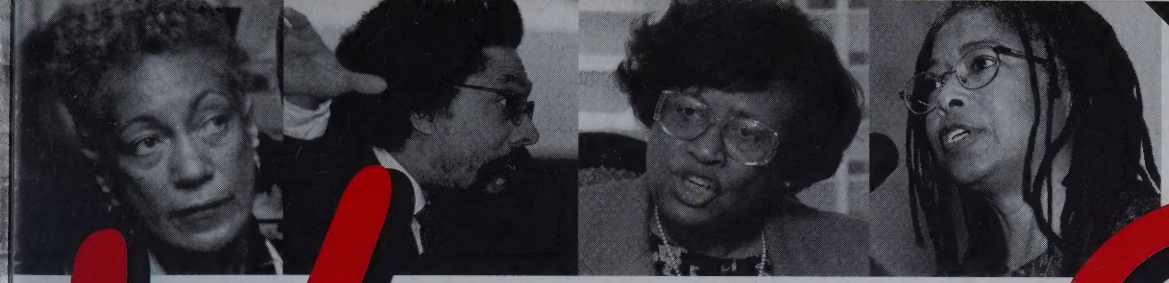

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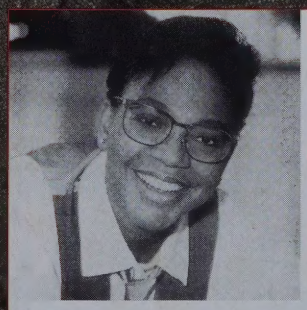

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Michael Boatman-actor of ABC's Spin City
photo courtesy of ABC Studios, New York

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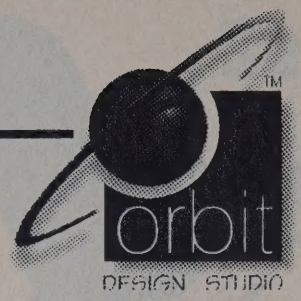

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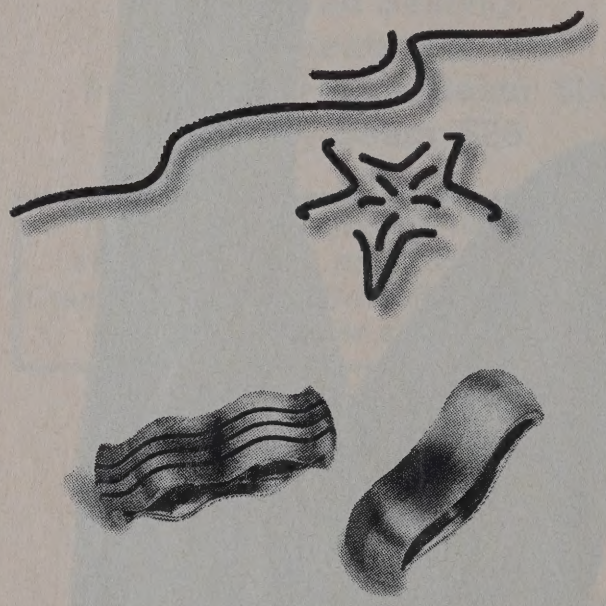

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LETTERS

Dear Venus,

I really enjoyed the last issue of the magazine. You are truly growing. It has a nice blend of information and entertainment. Please keep up the great work!

God Bless,
Michael Nelson

Dear Venus,

I found your magazine at St. Elmo's Bookstore here in Pittsburgh, PA for the first time. I really enjoyed reading it and I shared it with my friends. This is incredible, a magazine just for Us!!

Thanks A lot!
Brenda Johnson

Dear Editor,

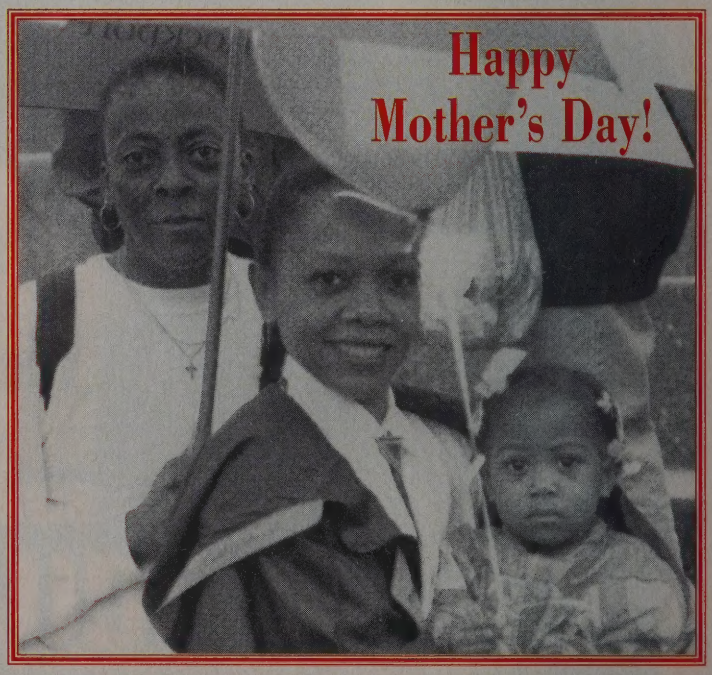
Thank you for your publication, Venus. I love all your article, especially Ask Marian. I do look forward to seeing future article. This magazine is so very much needed to remove all types of sterotypes.
Thank you to all who made this magazine a success.

Luis Fernandez
Houston, TX

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the article on Ann Nesby. She is one of my all time favorite singers. I too was raised in the church, directed the chior and spent many hours in rehearsals perfecting my chior's style. Although I'm not out at church, It sure is refreshing to see someone talking about the contributions made to the black church by gays & lesbians. Keep up the good work Venus!

O. Tandy



Venus™

News, Entertainment & Lifestyles
The Nation's Leading Magazine for
People of African Descent in the Life.

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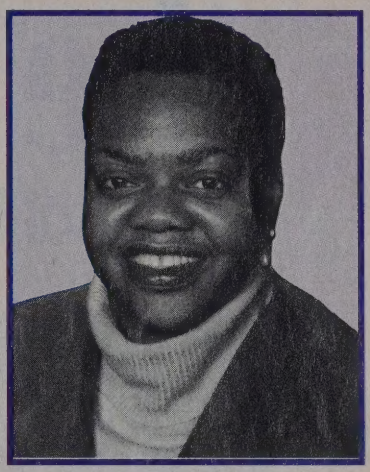
FROM THE PUBLISHER

As we move closer to the new millennium I feel confident that we will see an attitude shift in our African American communities at large. It's becoming increasingly harder for straight black folks to ignore the wonderful contributions made by members of the black family who happen to be gay or lesbian. This can mainly be attributed to increased visibility in African American gay and lesbian communities across this country.

Whenever our parents spoke of someone's gay child, they basically said, "you know so and so's son is 'Sissy'! " or "I feel so badly for my sister finding out her daughter is a Bulldagger!" The images of us in the minds of our straight black families has kept these attitudes alive. But this is changing. Our people are beginning to see new images of us, portrayed accurately and honestly. Images like Carter, a black gay male character on ABC's Spin City played by actor Michael Boatman.



In our interview with Boatman, we discover how this straight actor perceives his own role as a gay man and what effect he hopes his character will have on Black families, black gays & lesbians and on his own life.

The contributions of comedian Karen Williams are also very important in terms of changing attitudes in our communities. Not just because she's a dynamic black woman accurately representing gay & lesbian life in her stand up routines and workshops but because she's down right F-U-N-N-Y! I believe that humor holds healing for all of us. If something is funny, it's just funny. Gay, straight, young, old, black or blue, Karen will touch that funny bone. Williams shares how she got started as America's Funniest Black Lesbian. Interested in becoming a comedian? Look for her workshop series to visit Atlanta, New York and other cities later this year.

Washington D.C. is buzzing with excitement as the 7th Annual Black Gay Pride Weekend gets underway. Additionally, D.C. has been chosen as the next Conference site for the National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum. The 1998 theme: 'Empowering Ourselves, Expanding Our Community.' You can find information about how you and your organization can become a member of the Forum by visiting our website at www.venusmagazine.com. That's right! We're finally up on the worldwide Web so stop by! We want to hear from you!!

Charlene Cothran
Publisher

PEOPLE

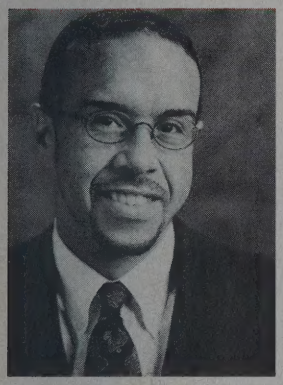
Meet the BOARD of the National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum

Steve Oxendine is currently Chief Operating Officer of the National Task Force On AIDS Prevention in San Francisco, CA. A native of Richmond, Indiana and eighteen-year resident of New York,NY, Steve held the position of Vice President, Corporate Operations for The Easton Events Company, in Easton, PA, prior to joining the staff of The Task Force. In 1993, he was chosen to chair the committee which produced the rally for Stonewall 25, International March On the United Nations To Affirm Human Rights of Lesbian and Gay People. Steve currently chairs the Board of Directors of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum.

Debra Rose is a native of Denver, Colorado. She was so inspired by attending the Forums 1994 Conference that she returned to Colorado to found the organization's only pilot chapter of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum. "I feared that internalized homophobia would forever keep this region's black gays and lesbians despaired, dispirited and disrespected." The chapter's goal is to give political voice to people of color communities as well as to increase visibility of black gays and lesbians to heterosexual communities in Denver. Debra is employed with United Airlines and has one daughter and a handsome grandson. When asked about her relationship status, she replies,"...I have just recently started 'keeping company' with someone special."

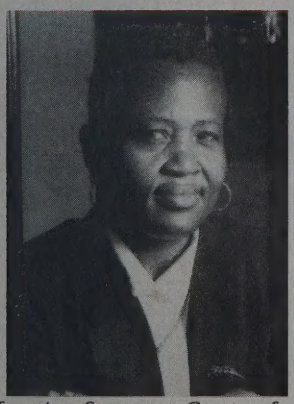
Board members not pictured include: Willa Taylor, Sonya Shields, Charlene Cothran and Mark Columb.

Joy Barnes has more than twenty years of award-winning media sales, advertising management, and related experience in marketing and public relations. At Images USA, a minority owned marketing communications firm based in Atlanta, her primary responsibilities as a senior account supervisor are in new business development and account management. As a native New Yorker, Joy has called Atlanta home for fifteen years. Joy received her degree in English and journalism from Parsons College.

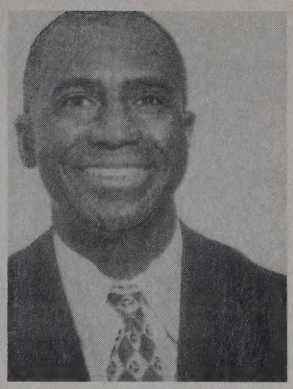


Michael C. Piper holds degrees in biology and financial economics. He is manager for a computer firm specializing in electronic document imaging and workflow automation. Michael is a founding member of H.O.P.E. Fund, a funding organization to Southeast Michigan Gay and Lesbian organizations. Michael is currently a member of the NAACP, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Michael has received various community service and leadership awards.

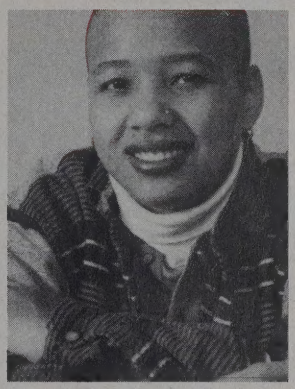
Sherry Harris, born and raised in Newark ,New Jersey, served on the Seattle city council from 1991-95. Sherry was the first openly gay African-American woman to be elected to public office in the United States. She holds degrees in erogonomic design and business administration. Sherry is a national leader in the lesbian and gay civil rights and women's movements. Today, Sherry is an author and motivational speaker.



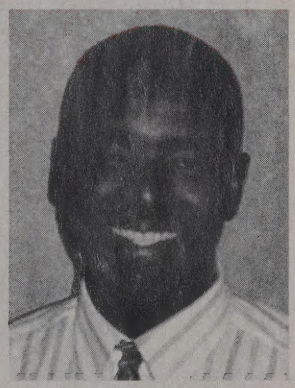
Brenda Crawford is a pre-women's movement out lesbian. She recently became the first African-American lesbian to be elected as president of the East Bay Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club, one of the oldest Democratic Clubs in the bay area. Brenda plans to run for the Oakland City Council in 1998. She is currently a management consultant who works for the Support Center for non-profit management in San Francisco.



Ron Johnson currently serves as Citywide Coordinator of AIDS Policy, Office of the Mayor, city of New York. Ronald received his degrees in Psychology from City College of New York and attended Harvard University's graduate school of Arts and Sciences. Ronald's volunteer efforts include membership on numerous boards, such as Lambda Legal Defense (1993-1996), and the Gay Men's Health Crisis (1986-1988). Born in New York City, Ronald proudly serves as an usher at Riverside Church and currently resides in Brooklyn with his son.



Rhonda Mundhenk was born in 1973 in Ny Trang, Vietnam. She grew up in Papua New Guinea, and went to high school in Australia and Malaysia before returning to America for college. She attended law school at Northwestern University. Rhonda serves as the co-editor of BlackLines, a zine for Black Lesbian and gay Chicagoans. She also sits on the steering committee of Chicago Black Lesbians and Gays. She recently received the Youth Achievement Award from the Greater Chicago Committee.



Steve Walker is a black gay activist in Houston, Texas. He is Director of Public Information for the Houston HIV Prevention Information at the Houston Department of Health and Human Service. Walker is a key organizer of Houston's gay and lesbian communities of color, and in 1995 co-founded the African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), a Houston support and advocacy group for black lesbians and gays. Steve is involved in a committed relationship with Stephen E. Brown. The couple live together in Houston's museum district.

Joan Fountain is the author of the inspirational "Nothing Bad Happens, Ever," and has appeared on several talk shows, including Sally, Montel, and Oprah. Joan offers training in conflict resolution, burnout, and sexual harassment, team building, and self-esteem. Joan has also provided training to Turner Broadcasting, American Airlines, Westinghouse, and AT & T. Her goal is to empower and equip participants to continuously monitor and assess their own and others behavior, attitudes, and values.

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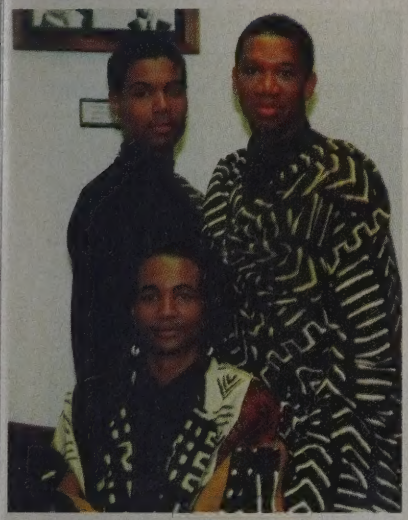
COORS BEER

Friends of Venus Magazines celebrated Black History month at the Auburn Ave. Research Library on African American Culture & History by creating Atlanta's only Black gay& lesbian archive.



Adodi Muse: A Black Gay Ensemble performed "How I got Over" Standing, Malik Williams, Duncan Teague. Tony

Dr. Shirlene Holmes,GA State Univ. & Dr. Rudolph Byrd,Emory

l to r Joan Garner, Julie V. Hunter,Dir. Fulton County Library Systems, Dr. Rosetta Ross, Emory University, Susane Lovest, Venus Magazine

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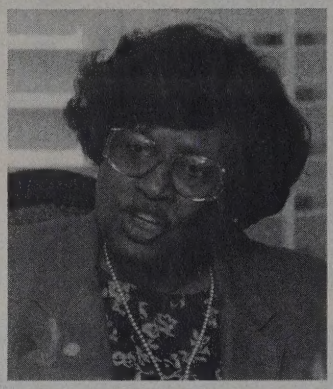
BE SMART! Has there really been a decline in AIDS-related deaths?

In a recent telephone press briefing Dr.Joycelyn Elders, along with Alberto Avendano, M.D., executive Director, Florida AIDS Action Council, and Moises Agosto, patient advocate, National Minority AIDS Council, addressed several issues stemming from the recent CDC announcement stating declines in the number of AIDS-related deaths. Dr. Elders was quick to point out that although the numbers of deaths have decreased in whites by nearly 20% in 1996, the alarming reality is that deaths have decreased by only 2% in African-American communities, and the death rate among African-American Gay men is still climbing.



"While the overall message in the CDC data is encouraging, it is very troubling to realize that African Americans and Hispanics with this disease are still very much on the outside looking in when it comes to the access and application of recent treatment advances," said Dr. Elders, former Surgeon General of the United States. "It is particularly disturbing when you consider how fast HIV is spreading within communitites of color."

To help address these information needs, an educational campaign, "Be Smart About HIV," has been launched to carry the message to African-American & Hispanic populations. The message focuses on:

*potential barriers that may limit access to treatment and prevention information in African-Americans, and Anglos and Hispanic populations.

*the importance of knowing one's HIV status and how to access assistance.

*the need for a clearer understanding of recent treatment advances and the importance of seeing a medical professional.

A "Be Smart" toll-free number, 1-888-TREAT HIV or 1-888-CUIDESE (for Spanish), provides callers with information about the medical management of HIV.

Cities with the Highest Incidence of African American AIDS Cases	Cumulative AIDS Cases	African Americans Cases%
New York`	37,165	40%
Los Angeles	36,835	19%
San Francisco	21,313	10%
Miami	17,896	48%
Chicago	13,112	51%
Houston	12,699	28%
Dallas	9,166	22%
Detroit	3,653	86%
Baltimore	11,864	70%
Philadelphia	7,329	61%
Washington,DC	3,633	71%
Atlanta	11,588	54%

(Source: CDC "Update: Trends In AIDS Incidence, Deaths and Prevalance U.S. 1996, MMWR. February,1997)

AIDS WATCH

Glaxo Wellcome's drug 1592 shows tremendous promise as a new drug in the fight against HIV. Glaxo has known of this drug for the past nine years, but is only now engaging in the clinical trials necessary to bring it to market. After months of negotiations, they have promised to allow people desperate for the drug to get it through an expanded access program. Unfortunately, they do not plan on initiating the program until sometime this summer. For many people who have grown resistant to their existing combination therapies, summer may be too long to wait for a drug may save lives!

Call and Fax Glaxo Wellcome TODAY and demand the release of 1592 for expanded access now!

Call: Robert Ingram, President and CEO 919-248-2100
or call: Robert Bell, VP Research, fax: 919-483-6150
Mike Hamilton, Director of Marketing, fax: 919-315-0421
Stephen Lafon, Assoc. Director, Antiviral Clinical Research,
fax: 919-315-0377, Phone 919-483-1346.

LESBIANS LIVING WITH BREAST CANCER

A research project on lesbians and breast cancer will begin to document the commonly shared experiences of lesbians with breast cancer as well as their unique experiences and perspectives. We are interested in talking with lesbians who have been diagnosed with any type of breast cancer, who are at any stage of treatment or are beyond treatment. Participation will involve a private conversation about your experiences as a lesbian with breast cancer. It will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you. If you or anyone you know is interested and willing to talk with me, please contact me at 404/651-2866

Cervical Cancer 100% Preventable

African-American women are 2.8 times more likely to die from cervical cancer than any other women. As with breast cancer, African-American women experience the highest mortality rates. The disparity between the races is attributed to risk factors, differences in screening, follow-up, treatment; and differences in the stage of the disease at the time of diagnosis and receipt of treatment.

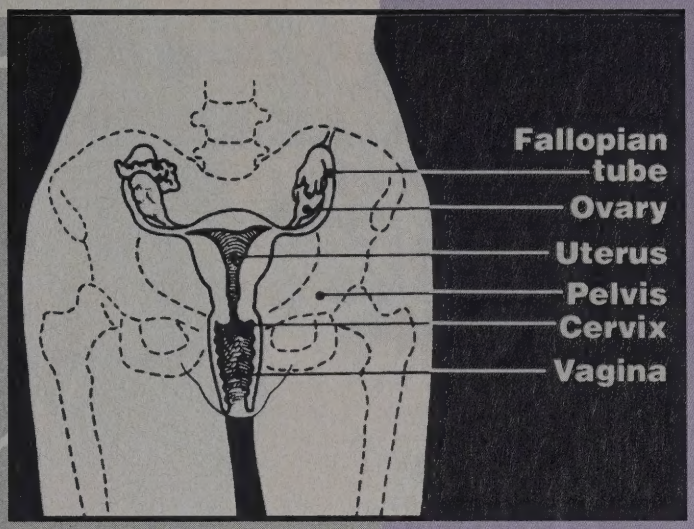
The American Cancer Societiy estimated 15,700 new cases of cervical cancer in 1996 and 4,700 will die from this form of cancer. Among the 4,700 women who will die from this disease, nearly 100% are preventable. In recent decades, cervical cancer incidence (diagnosed cases)and mortality (deaths) have decreased due to early detection and treatment.

For all women regardless of race, cervical cancer is highest in young women under 50 years of age. This increased detection of cancer is believed to be a result of increased screening.

Risk factors associated with developing cervical cancer included the following:

1) Early age at first intercourse;
2) A history of multiple male sex partners
3) A history of sexually transmitted diseases;
4) Infection with certain genotypes of human papilloma virus;
5) Smoking
6) Black, Hispanic,or Native American racial/ethnic background;
7) Low socioeconomic status (lack of funds/insurance coverage for detection, treatment and follow-up)

Outside of making behavioral changes, use of the pap test is the only way to detect cervical cancer. The pap test is a procedure done as part of a pelvic exam. It is used to find abnormal cells of the cervix before they become cancer. A health care provider takes cells from the uterus using a special apparatus inserted through the vagina during a pelvic exam. The pap test is not a test for pregnancy or any sexually transmitted diesase. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends having a pap test two weeks after a women experiences her menstural cycle



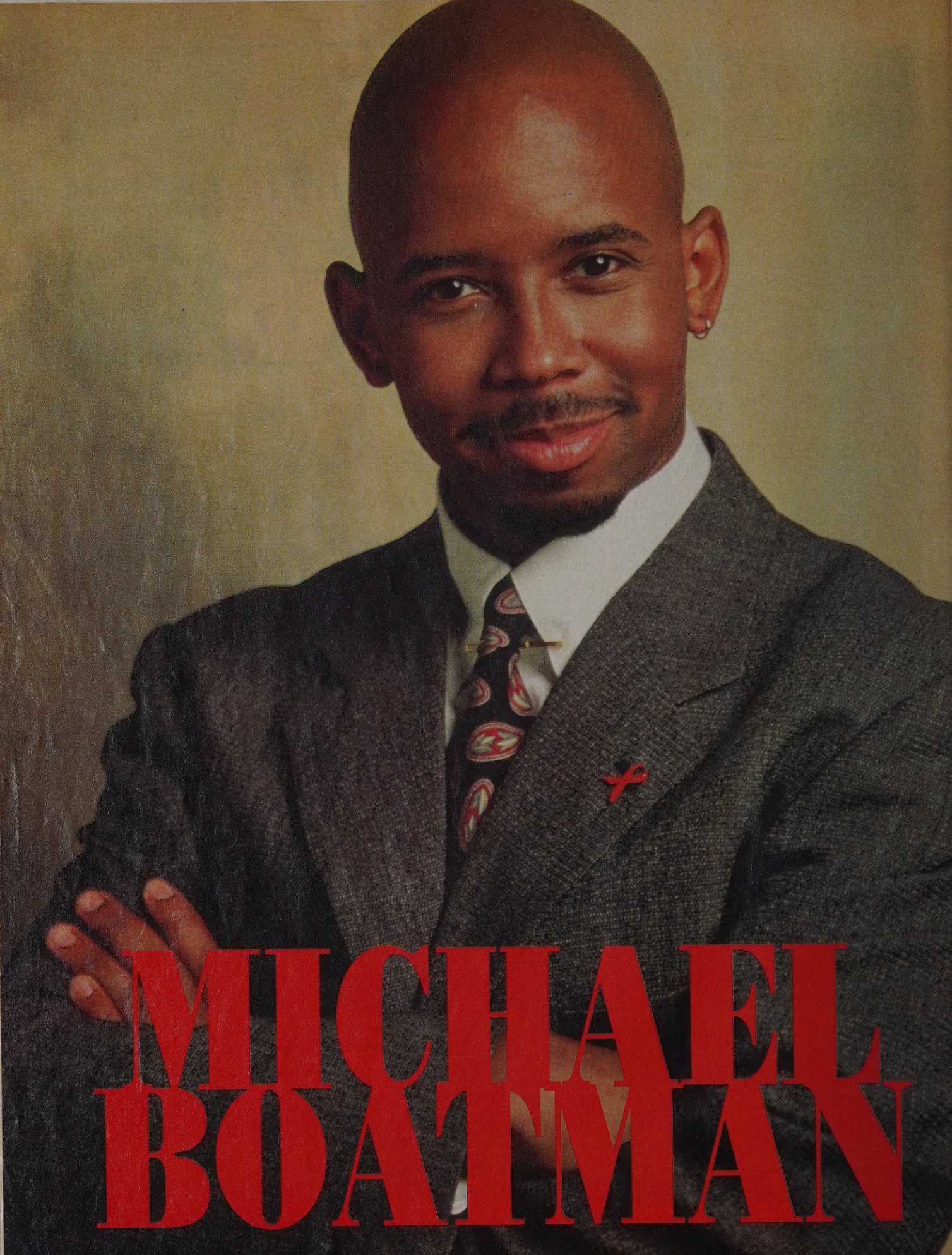
(or period) and after any bleeding or infection in the vagina has been treated or cleared up. A women should get a pap test once a year if 18 or older or more often if her pap smear is abnormal. It is also recommended that a woman have a pap smear once a year if she has ever had sex (vaginal intercouse) regardless of age.

Health practitioners recommend that a woman take the following steps before having a pap test in order to insure the accuracy of her results:

1) Do not have sex (sexual intercourse – fingers, penis, sex toys, manual manipulation) for two days before the test;
2) Do not wash the vagina or douche for 2 days before the test;
3) Do not put anything in the vagina for 2 days before the test. [No tampons, sponges, douches, cervical caps, diaphragms, creams, foam, condoms,etc.]

Once a pap smear is sent to a lab for testing, your health care practitioner will let you know if the lab report indicates cells collected from the uterus are normal or not. For women diagnosed with early stage cervical cancer, the likelihood of survival is almost 100% if treatment and follow-up is received. Women with localized cervical cancer, the survival rate falls slightly to 89%. However, for patients in whom the invasive cervical cancer has spread to distant sites in the body, a five-year relative survival rate is about 14%. The earlier suspicious cancerous cells are detected the quickier treatment and follow-up can begin. So, go ahead, schedule your pap test appointment today.

By Dr. Leonard Jack, Jr.



MICHAEL BOATMAN

KEEPING IT REAL?, KEEPING IT RIGHT!

For Michael Boatman, playing an openly gay African American character on mainstream prime time television has been a journey full of personal revelations about tolerance, perceptions, and stereotypes that transcend sexuality, race and gender. Speaking to Michael Boatman immediately after winning the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Comedy Series, it was clear that he understands the significance of his character to the African American gay and lesbian community.

On Spin City (ABC) Michael Boatman plays Carter Heywood, an openly gay activist who is the Special Assistant for Minority Affairs to the mayor of New York City. Centered around the Big Apple's hardball political machine, Michael's character is a typical strong savvy New Yorker who won't be played out. Considering the history of African American gay characters on television, which is limited to the limp wrist and lisping Antoine and Blain characters from "In Living Color's 'Men on Film'." Michael Boatman's character maybe on the forefront of a new era of positive and real representations of the diversity within the African American gay and lesbian community.

"I just want to make sure that Carter is not an insult to anyone", says Michael, "My major concern is that as a black man, I represent both the minorities that I play in this show with dignity, respect, honor and humanity. Just let him be a human being."

Michael, who is married with a baby daughter, is very forthright when asked about his insight into playing a gay character. He is thankful for friendships with gay people and close relationships with activists who have given him guidance on his character. Michael also zeros in on his personal motivation in developing his character. "My motivation for this character comes from being an African American living in America," he says. "Carter is some who is strong and angry. Someone who is articulate about perceived injustice in the world and in his community. He has something to say and won't put up with any BS", says Boatman.

"I was nervous about doing this role because I feared that the gay community would respond to me the same way I respond to people when I see them put on black face."

"I was nervous about doing this role because I feared that the gay community would respond to me the same way I respond to people when I see them put on black face."

Michael says that the feedback on his portrayal of an openly gay character has been very supportive, although questions about his integrity as an African American character still arise, "The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, sometimes when you play a character like Carter who is the only minority in an all white setting, unfortu-

By Quohnos Mitchel

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A public health message from the National Minority AIDS Council and the National Lesbian and Gay Health Association in cooperation with Glaxo Wellcome.

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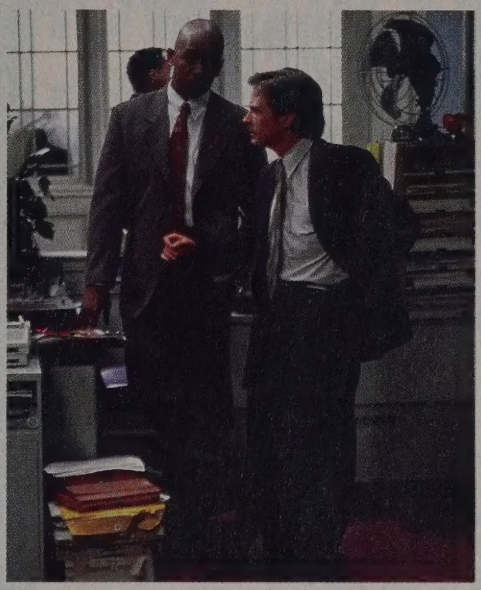
nately questions are inevitable", states Michael. "If they are not doing certain things in a certain way or speak in certain ways that do not fit into certain stereotypes that we have set up for ourselves, ironically people within our own community start pointing the fingers and saying, Hey! he is not black enough or you are trying to be white. People forget that we all come from so many different backgrounds in our, gay, straight, black, and lesbian communities. It is sad that sometimes we only accept a certain kind of black person."



"Carter is a double minority character and is a metaphor for being black and gay"

Still others have questioned his portrayal of a gay man. "People who have watched the show and did not know that Carter was a gay character, they say to me your character does not act gay and I'm like well what does a gay man act like! It's the same thing. What does a black man quote un-quote act like! It's all about perception."

So far references to love relationships have been limited to characters played by Luke Perry and Issac Mizrahi. When asked about possibilities for developing relationships with other African American men, Michael keeps it real. "After those shows aired I got a lot of mail from African American gay groups. I have spoken with the producers so it is going to happen! What I don't want to see is Carter becoming involved in a perfect sanitized relationship. I love the idea that as a gay man he can be just as screwed up as other people in the office.", says Michael. "I have seen television shows with gay characters and African American characters and sometimes we are so noble. Producers are so afraid to say yes he is a black guy and he is an asshole or yes he is a gay guy and he is also a jerk, so they tend to write them as very sweet bland characters. Hey, Maybe Carter is not good in relationships, many people aren't and that's real."

After roles on China Beach, Living Single and the Larry Sanders Show, why does Michael feel that this is his most important role yet? Because he has a more honest view of what it is to be a gay African American man in relation to being a straight African American man. "There is a great degree of racism within the gay and lesbian community as a whole, it was surprising." declares Michael, "I would think that there would be more tolerance within the gay and lesbian community. Just like black on black crime in the African American community, don't you think that there is someone out there who sits and watches and says yes this is exactly what we want to see. As long as we are so involved in not supporting each other and pointing the finger, we don't have time or will or opportunity to stop and say who set this up, who put the drugs in our community, who is creating these circumstances."

"My message to the whole African American community is; I would love for us to come together as a community and accept the diversity of our people"

"My message to the whole African American community is; I would love for us to come together as a community and accept the diversity of our people" , he says.

"Carter Heywood is a gay black man who works largely in the white world of politics, how can you relate this man to your life? What does this man have in common with other people in your life? Is he really that weird because he is gay, or is he just like the guy who drives your bus, sits next to you at work, or who is your neighbor. I want people to come into an awareness of the vastness and variety in our community and the world."

Ask Marian

If you have questions about relationships, coming out, parents, childrens or whatever life presents email Marian at venusmag1@aol.com

Dear Marian,
After 10 years of one-night stands and relationships that don't seem to last for more than a few months, I want to find my soul mate and settle down. There is one obstacle. I haven't been tested for HIV for 3 years and I can't face going through that sweat again. I know I need to pass this hurdle but can't muster up the courage. What do you suggest?
Stressed.

Dear Stressed,
You need to find support for yourself so that you can deal with the STRESS of testing. Testing can be one of the hardest events emotionally as it raises many issues. Do you have any friends or family members you can trust? Remember if you tell them you are going to test, they will want to know the results too. If you need to talk confidentially outside your "circle" contact your local gay & Lesbian switch board, the Minority Task Force on AIDS, 1-888-TREAT HIV, or the National AIDS Hotline 800-342-AIDS. They will put you in touch with local organizations and support groups. Consider what test site is most comfortable for you. You can get anonymous testing at some community-based organizations in addition to clinics. Last but not least,

Dear Marian,
I'm always hearing about Gaydar! One of my friends is always telling me, "Oh, I can just tell if someone is gay!" Well, why can't I?
Strambled.

Dear Strambled,
You can't tell because you haven't had your gaydar unit properly installed by Radio Shack! (Only $125.00 on sale this week!). The truth is that you have to take the gaydar thing with a grain of salt. I don't think anyone should ever just assume another person is either gay or straight.

In reality, gaydar is a myth. It's very much like "deja vu" in that you draw conscious conclusions after analyzing the scene and figuring probabilities. Gay men who have been out many years have usually experienced situations and observed behaviors in other recognized gay men to the point that the "intuitive process" seems automatic and highly reliable. Believe me, though, it is neither!

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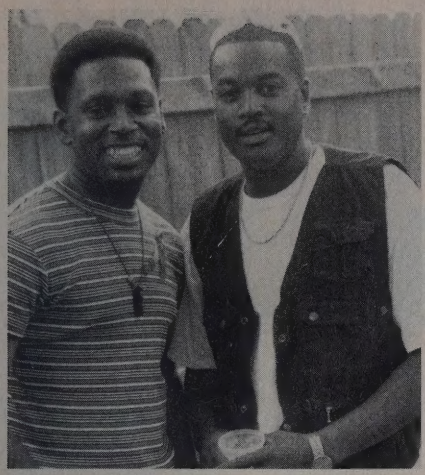


HOW TO FIND YOUR SOUL MATE: a QUIZ!

Finding the Mr. or Ms. Right can definitely work your nerves if you're not careful. Let's face it. Looking for love is hard work, (which is why many of us choose to avoid the process and hide behind the "I don't want anyone in my life right now" lie).

Say you meet someone who definitely piques your interest. How can you know if this charming hunk of man or woman could possibly be 'THE ONE'?

This quiz consists of 13 questions to ask yourself about the person you are considering as a mate—and for your possible mate to ask you!

If you and your potential mate are able to honestly answer yes to all 13 questions about one another, your chances of living together happily ever after should be greatly increased. At the very least your answers should point out areas to work on before attempting a long-term commitment.

1. Is this potential mate able to express his/her feelings--from affection to anger–comfortably? ❒ Yes ❒ No
2. Is this potential mate in charge of his/her own life, so that he/she will not become overly dependent on me? ❒ Yes ❒ No
3. Will this potential mate face and work out problems in our relationship? ❒ Yes ❒ No
4. Does this potential mate put forth the effort to make sure he/she clearly understands feelings I express to him/her? ❒ Yes ❒ No
5. Does this potential mate give as well as receive? ❒ Yes ❒ No
6. Is this potential mate able to express his/her needs and receive as well as give? ❒ Yes ❒ No
7. Are this potential mate and I at similar intellectual levels, so that neither of us will feel seriously superior– or inferior– to the other? ❒ Yes ❒ No
8. Are this potential mate and I at similar economic levels, so that neither of us will feel seriously superior– or inferior to the other? ❒ Yes ❒ No
9. Does this potential mate understand and respect my values and needs? ❒ Yes ❒ No
10. Do this potential mate and I like enough of the same kinds of recreational activities so that we will enjoy having fun together? ❒ Yes ❒ No
11. Do this potential mate and I like enough of the same kinds of social activities so that we will enjoy socializing together? ❒ Yes ❒ No
12. Is this potential mate comfortable with his/her sexuality? ❒ Yes ❒ No
13. Are this potential mate and I compatible sexually? ❒ Yes ❒ No

In order to be in a position to answer the preceding questions honestly and knowledgeably, Betty Berzon, Ph.D., author of the book Permanent Partners-Building Gay & Lesbian Relationships That Last (New York:E.P. Dutton, 1988), strongly recommends that a couple spend at least six months getting to know one another before attempting a serious commitment like living together.

INGREDIENTS OF A LASTING RELATIONSHIP

The Male Couple's Guide to Living Together(New York:Harper & Row, 1988) by Eric Marcus lists five critical ingredients of a happy, lasting relationship:

1. Agreement. Before making the decision to enter into a lasting relationship, the couple discusses and agrees upon a basic code of behavior they will live by. This code is based upon whatever behaviors are important to each person--behavior like whether or not sex outside the relationship is acceptable.
2. Commitment. No matter what is going on in their lives separately and together, during the bad times as well as the good, the most important thing in each partner's life is that the two of them stay together.
3. Communication. After entering into a relationship, the couple continues to openly discuss and update the code of behavior they will live by, expanding it as they learn more and more about each other, about their personal selves, and as circumstances warrant. Communication also includes each person's regularly expressing his or her love for and feelings about the other. Communication includes heated arguments as well as hot sex.
4. Compromise. Because of their commitment to their relationship, the couple handles disagreements by each member's willingness to compromise with the other, compromising to the degree that the compromise truly is acceptable and will benefit the relationship but not to the degree that the compromise is totally unacceptable and will only end up hurting the relationship in the long run. Compromise is based upon a win-win outcome for each person and the relationship.
5. Acceptance. Each member of the couple accepts the other--flaws, shortcomings, and all--and recognizes how hurtful it can be to a relationship to enter into it with any sort of secret plan to change the other person.

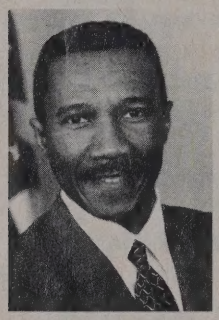
NEWS&NOTES

GET THE 411

URVASHI VAID APPOINTED AS NEW DIRECTOR OF NGLTF'S POLICY INSTITUTE

Washington D.C. - John D'Emilio, noted author and historian and director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), will step down from his positions effective March 28, 1997. Urvashi Vaid, former Task Force Executive Director and author of Virtual Equality, will assume the directorship of the Policy Institute.

NAACP CALLS NATIONWIDE HOTEL CORPORATION BOYCOTT



Washington D.C.- The National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum recently voted to endorse the NAACP and President Kweisi Mfume as the organization calls for a boycott of Holiday Inn, Best Western and other leading hotel chains, assailing the lodging industry's record in the hiring and promotion of African-Americans.

The boycott is the first step in a broader effort to maximize Black buying power in corporate America, Mfume said recently. "African Americans spend more than $4 billion annually on travel and lodging, with much of this going to the lodging industry," Mfume said. "The lodging industry has an abysmal record of including African Americans in all aspects of its operations."

Mfume urged people "to immediately exercise personal responsibility and use our consumer guide" when planning business trips and vacations. He further emphasized, "A selective boycott -yes. It means exactly that. Punish, quite frankly, our enemies."

Mfume said the call for a boycott was supported by 55 primarily Black organizations and represented a membership of more than nine million. They include the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Inc., the National Urban League and National Council of Negro Women.

Of the 16 companies who were sent a four-page questionnaire seeking general information such as number of Black employees in executive, managerial, and professional positions, none answered the entire survey and only six received passing grades.

Marriott International and Hilton Corp. both received a "C", the highest grade awarded; Hyatt Hotels Corp., Adams Mark Hotels and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Corp. were graded a "C-minus, and HFS Inc., operators of Days Inns, got a "D".

Ten firms with lower grades were targeted by the boycott. Two of them, ITT Sheraton Corp. and Promus Hotel Corp., which runs the Embassy Suites chain, answered some questions but withheld information dealing with employment and property ownership. Each received a "D-minus".

Mfume said several firms notified the NAACP that they would not participate: Westin Hotels, Best Western International, Radisson Hospitality and Renaissance Hotels.

ANGELA DAVIS KICKS OFF WOMEN'S WRITERS CONFERENCE

Washington D.C.-Professor Angela Davis, Internationally known for her ongoing work to combat oppression in the U.S. and abroad, spoke at the University of the District of Columbia. Her topic was "100 Years of Struggle: From The Black Woman's Club Movement (1896) to the Black Womanist Movement (1996)."

The Conference is sponsored by African American Women's Resource Center, Inc., A project of Sisterspace And Books. Featuring Octavia Butler and other leading writers, the event will happen on the Howard University campus April 25-27,1997. For more information call (202) 332-3433.

WASHINGTON AND ATLANTA SELECTED TO HOST NEXT BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY CONFERENCES

Washington – For the first time ever, the nation's capital will be the site of the Annual Conference of the

National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum.

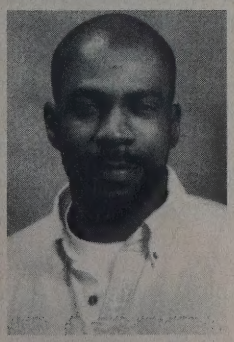
The Eleventh Annual National Black Lesbian and Gay Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. February 12-15, 1998. The theme will be Empowering Ourselves, Expanding Our Community. In the following year, the Conference moves to Atlanta, Georgia from February 11-14, 1999.

"These next two conferences will extend the reach of the Forum to new communities throughout the nation," said Keith Boykin, the Forum's Executive Director. "The Forum's new office in Washington provides a perfect organizational structure to put on the D.C. Conference, and the strength of Atlanta's vibrant black lesbian and gay community will ensure the success of the 1999 Conference."

The Board of Directors has developed a new application process for community groups that want to host the Conference in their city. Organizations can contact the Leadership Forum in Washington to find out more about the application process.

For more information, contact the Forum at 1436 U Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 483-6786, E-mail: NBGLLF@aol.com.

NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE NAMES MARK F. JOHNSON NEW TASK FORCE MEDIA DIRECTOR



Washington, D.C. - Kerry Lobel, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), announced the appointment of Mark F. Johnson as Media Director.

Prior to coming to NGTLF, Johnson was a media specialist with the Democratic National Committee (DNC) where he worked primarily on outreach to the gay and lesbian media and also on public relations efforts aimed at the lesbian and gay community.

Johnson was also the News Media Director for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and worked for eight years in the lobbying department of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) in Washington, D.C.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN GAYS AND LESBIANS DESCEND UPON PALM SPRINGS FOR EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT

Palm Springs - The Summit will be held May 9, 10, and 11 at the beautiful Desert Oasis Estate, in Palm Springs, California.

A round table discussion of the challenges facing the African-American gay and lesbian communities will be held Saturday May 10, 1997 from 10am to 3pm at the Desert Oasis estate. Confirmed speakers include Donald L. Perry, MBA, Managing partner, Pine Cobble Partners; Stanley Bennett Clay, Editor and Publisher, SBC Magazine; Stephen Johnson, Editor and Publisher, WHAZZUP Magazine; and former congressional candidate, Anita Rufus. For more information, please call Barry Blackstone, Events Coordinator at (619) 770-6053/fax (619) 864-1453, or write to The Summit, 611 South Palm Canyon Dr., Suite 7132, Palm Springs, CA 92264.

LGADDA ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

San Francisco - New officers of Lesbians and Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action (LGADDA) were elected. Ron Hypolite, an Oakland attorney and the Client Services Director of the AIDS Legal Referral Program, was elected chair. Hypolite is also the Editor of Departure, An African-American monthly newsletter.

In accepting the nomination, Hypolite said his goals for LGADDA include "renewing alliances with other organizations representing lesbian/gay communities of color, coalescing with the larger lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgender community, strengthening ties with the African-American community at large, and working with our leaders in City Hall."

Also elected: Alonzo Reese - Chair of LGADDA's Political Action Committee, Gwen Craig - Corresponding Secretary, Randy Miller - Treasurer.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE McKINNEY DEPLORES NIGHTCLUB BOMBING

DECATUR, GA - Responding within hours to the news of the bomb exploding at an Atlanta gay nightclub, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney says, "Once again, the actions of a radical minority in our society have tried to override the civil liberties of lesbians and gays by trying to deny them their First Amendment right of 'Freedom of Assembly' as well as their right to '...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' This insidious attack was an act of cowardice designed to do physical harm to the clientele of a club frequented by lesbians and gays. This bombing was, plain and simple, a hate crime and homophobia at its worst," contended Congresswoman McKinney.

"Further, the bombing highlights the need for a federal statute change to add 'sexual orientation' to the list of offi- Continued on page 29

Karen Williams

The Cosmic Comic

Abigail Huller

When one is in the company of a comedian, one starts to wonder what is it that makes them funny. Could it be that true comics have an extra gleam in their eyes? Or could it be that their laughter alone enchants a listener enough to make one want to laugh for the sake of unity?

As a professional and seasoned comic, Karen Williams has been making people laugh since she was a little girl growing up in New York. "I was nine years old when I told my first joke at a party. While I was there, someone asked if anyone knew any jokes that they could tell. I told the joke, however the hostess of the party wasn't happy because the joke was a bit risque'. So she told my parents. Later on that evening while I was in bed, my parents asked me to tell them what I had said. While I was telling them the joke, they turned their heads and smirked. I knew they thought the joke was funny, but even though they laughed they scolded me. That was the beginning pf my comic career."

During the course of her career, Williams has managed to maintain her status as "The Diva of Comedy" and the Queen of Improv". Rightfully, Williams as an internationally and nationally recognized performer, uses her humor to uplift,motivate, and heal her audiences. And as a gifted writer and actress, Williams' talents continue to expand. Her background includes over twenty years of improvisational comedy and theater techniques, psychodrama, dance and movement, active parenting and metaphysical studies. Adding to her lengthy resume of accomplishments is a string of comedy awards that date back to over a decade.

Williams' working talents are drawn from reality-based situations. She actively engages in cultivating new ties with populations of fans by lecturing nationally to student organizations on various college campuses across the United States. In her work as a humanist, Williams has participated in raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for various non-profit group AIDS organizations, women's health and social service agencies, recovery programs, multi-cultural youth centers and pride events.

Williams is also the creator and facilitor of the Humor-at-Large Workshop Series, and founder of the International Institute of Humor and Healing Arts. Her humor workshops are specifically designed to build self-confidence and promote self esteem. But beyond all of her accomplishments, talent, and beauty, what is truly great about Williams is she does more than make you laugh, she make you think while you chuckle. Here are a few thoughts she shared with Venus Magazine...

VM: What changes have you witnessed in your own career?

KW: My career has been an evolutionary process from the standpoint that, as I've awakened and experienced my unfolding, I've been able to move out into the cosmos- from student to helpmate, mother, wife secretary, partner, dancer, model, business owner and operator, executive assistant, comic and public speaker. All of these

careers have enhanced my ability to express myself verbally. Being highly articulate has paved the way for me in all of my career choices.

VM: From the angle of comedian, what is the true function of humor?
KW: Humor functions as an opener, a healer, a cover, a balm, a storyteller, a decoy, and a savior. It is the ultimate expression of one's true self. For this reason, humor is understood universally, and the reason why a simple smile conveys so much. Humor, the possession of it, becomes a way of life that is elevated and enlightened. It can mean that one is deeply introspective and able to synthesis meanings, then make decisions based on the synthesized data. That one chooses to transcend one's lesser ego to offer the world a laugh is the manifestation of a high degree of faith. The extension of good will is based in that faith– in a universal life force, a higher intelligence or being, the assertion of one's sheer determination. Humor allows one the opportunity to release and give what one can give freely to a friend, a neighbor, a stranger, a lover, a servant, a ruler. We can always give a smile, share a laugh, bridge the gaps of humanity with gift of one's good humor.

VM: Concerning your brand of humor, are you satisfied with the group of people you reach?
KW: I want my genre of humor to be even broader. I'm seeking an intergalactic audience (laughs).

VM: You're a wonderful storyteller. As someone gifted in using language, could you tell our readers what role language plays in the delivery of humor?
KW: Language as a tool of communication exists on the physical, mental and psychic levels and can be transmitted through body, mind, and word. Humor operates on all of these levels since it's being created in the mind, and transmitted through body actions and movements, as well as the spoken word.
Humor is a language unto itself.

VM: What powers rest in humor?
KW: The power that lies in humor is its ability to heal. Again, on all levels: physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual. Why is that? Because of its ability to OPEN. You cannot even chuckle without changing your whole face for the better. People are more attractive when they possess good humor. They are more aware and conscious of themselves and others. Because of its tremendous power, humor has been repressed, suppressed and has become the language of the oppressed. And you know, we spend lifetimes looking for mother's milk. Humor is the mother's milk that allows us to feed ourselves and be rejuvenated.

S. Mare is a law student at Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University.

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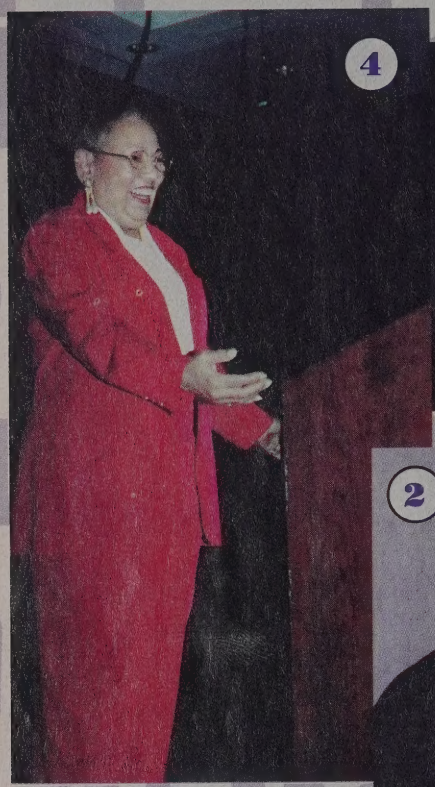
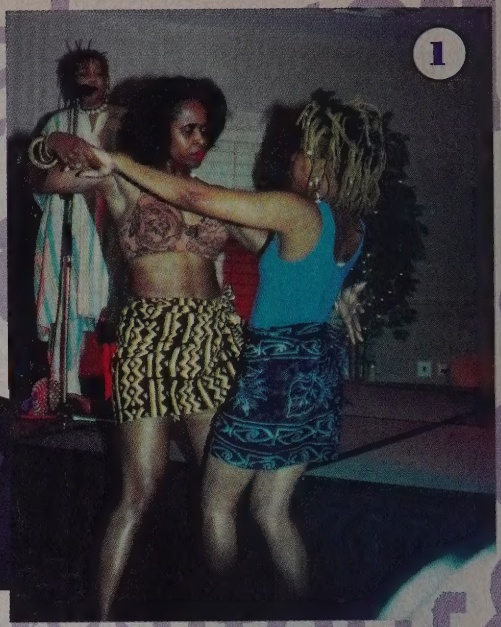
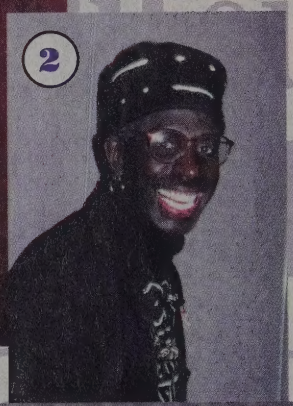
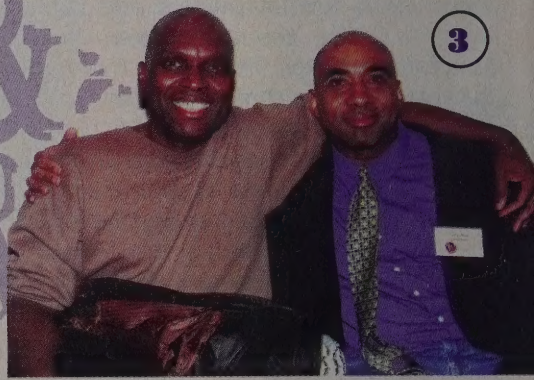








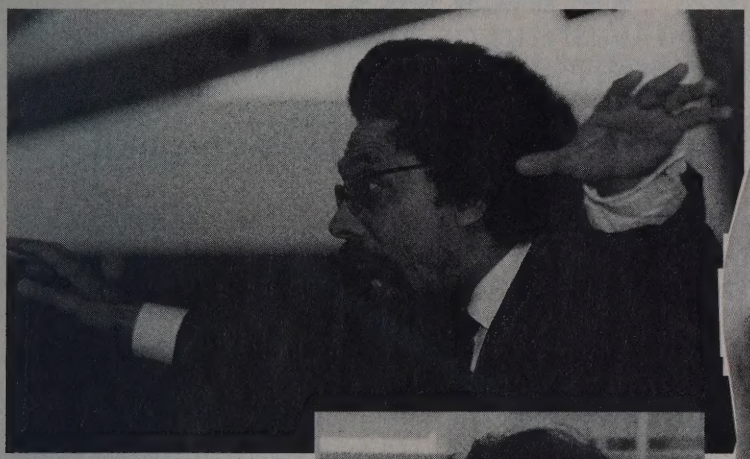
Highlights of The 10th Anniversary Conference of the Natioanl Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum,Long Beach, CA, February 1997.

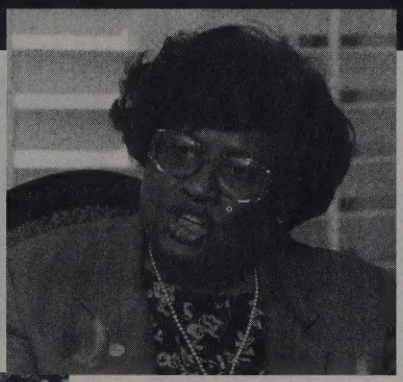
1.Opening Ceremony dancers ,produced by Gayle Furr & Co. 2. Reggie Williams at the AIDS Institute. 3. Gay Men of African Descent's Kenneth Tolbert, Chairman & Cary Alan Johnson, Executive Director. 4. Forum co-founder Ruth Waters at Opening Ceremonies. 5. LA writer Blain Teamer (center) and friends at the banquet. 6. The Adodi brothers, (l to r) Lawrence Denson, Boris Powell, Peter Fair, Rashad Burgess, Richard Birkett, David Carter, Kevin Spears and Isreal Wright. 7. The Chicago Delegation; Backrow:Michael Harrington, Warren Farley, LaTroy Nathan, Boris Powell, Steve Wakefield, Sanford Gaylord, Byron Stewart, Rashad Burgess, Renae Ogletree, Byron Mason Front: Sharon Jackson, Glen Wright, Rhonda Mundhenk.

Photo credits: Isreal Wright: 3, 5, 6, 7.William Jones: 1, 2, 4

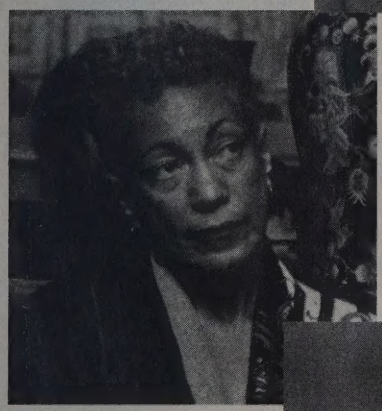
CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Cornel West of Havard Divinty School, spoke at the closing ceremonies. Thrilled participants showed their appreciation with a 15 minute standing ovation.





When asked about the 'masterbation' flap, former Surgeon General, Dr, Joycelyn Elders replied, "According to studies nearly 80% of adults masterbate; The other 20% lie!"



Activist and writer June Jordan intellectually reminded us to judge all people by the content of their character and not to automatically trust someone's motives just because they are gay.

Pulitzer Price winning author, Alice Walker opened her speech with a question. "If I were Bob Marley and we were in love would you sleep with me? If I were Tina Turner and we were in love, would you sleep with me? Well, that's where us two spirited people get into trouble. We say yes to both."

photo credit;Craig Bailey

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Hutch's Annual Black Pride Guide

Black Lesbian and Gay Pride Weekend-Washington D.C. ▪ May 22-26, 1997
For further information call Greg Hutchings (202) 543-7903

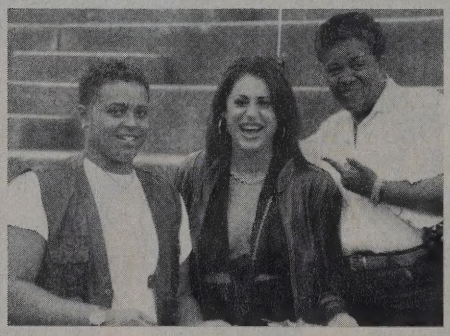
Thursday, May 22

PRIDE KICKOFF PARTY I
Roy Ayers In Concert
Diversity Nightclub,
1526 14th St. NW
Host:Women In the Life
contact (202) 667-8078
www.womeninthelife.com

Friday, May 23

BLACK PRIDE KICKOFF RECEPTION
6PM - 9PM $25
contact (202) 722-4780

PRIDE KICKOFF PARTY-PART II
Diversity Nightclub, 1526 14th St. NW
Host: Women In the Life
contact (202) 667-8078



MANHUNT -"SURVEYING"
The Edge, 56 L St. SW
9PM - Until $12
contact (202) 610-EDGE

BLACK PRIDE BOAT RIDE
Spirit of Washington,waterfront
11PM-2:30AM $40
contact (202)722-4780

Saturday, May 24

CULTURAL ARTS FESTIVAL
10AM - 5PM $10
contact (202)722-4780

KITCHEN DUTY PARTY
Food & Friends, 58 L St. SW
Help prepare meals for people with HIV/AIDS
10AM - 12Noon, free
Host: Oliver Ellis
contact (301)839-1801

LESBIANS OF THE DIASPORA
Poetry, politics, film, spirituality, health, music and dance
12 noon - 3PM, free
Radisson Barcelo Hotel
2121 P St. NW
Host: C.L.O.A.V.E.
contact (202) 293-3100

GO TO THE BEACH!
Annual Beach trip to Rehobeth
8AM - 6PM
Host: Curtis Massey
contact (202) 399-8060

PRIDE RECEPTION
Welcome to Publishers, writers reporters & web-masters

The Edge 56 L St. SW
1 - 3PM, Free
Host:Black Gay Media Assoc.
contact:(202)728-3890

ANNUAL AFTERNOON SOFT-N-WET
(For the Ladies)
WET 56 L St. SW (Navy Yard Metro)
Exotic Female Dancers in the Showers
3PM - 9PM $12, $10 adv.

Host: Sophisticated Ladies
contact:(202) 291-7896

ANNUAL PRIDE DAY RECEPTION
Host: Anthony Marshall, Esq.
6PM - 10PM
contact (202)488-8666

POSITIVE BROTHERS RECEPTION
(For HIV Positive Brothers, Their Lovers, or Caregivers)
819 L St. SE
2 PM- 5:30PM Free
contact (202)842-1337

ARTISTIC INTERLUDE:BLACK ARTISTS AND BLACK ART
1436 U St. NW, Ste. 200
3:30 PM - 6:30PM $11
Host:National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum
contact (202)483-6786

7th ANNUAL $3 COOKOUT

3PM-9PM
Host: Friends,Inc.(formerly known as D.C. Olympic Committee)
contact:Ryan Ferguson
(301) 853-0031

VALERIE'S BIRTHDAY BASH
Heart & Soul Cafe
424 8th St. SE
10 PM-3PM $8

IRA'S MEMORIAL DAY BARBEQUE
Host: Ira Palmer
3PM-8PM
contact (202) 728-3890

GOSPEL CONCERT
Featuring Jennifer Holiday
Lincoln Temple, 11th & R St. NW
Host:Inner Light Fellowship Church
7PM $20, $50 VIP
contact (301)899-1210

THE NITE SPLASH
Pool Party with free food, liquor and enough space to strut your stuff!
8PM-12AM $12
contact:Robert DeLoatch
(202)549-5122

PRIDE DANCE PARTY-PART III
"A Tribute To the Late Judy Douglas"
Black Cat Nightclub, 1831 14th St. NW
10PM-3AM
Host: Women In the Life
contact (202)667-8078

FEMALE BONDING AFFAIR
Let's Dance the Night Away
Caracalla Ristorante, 901 9th St. NW
Host: Sophisticated Ladies
10PM-3AM $10
contact (202) 291-7896

MIDNIGHT CRUISE ON THE ODYSSEY
Gangplank Marina, 600 Water St. SW
Host: The D.C. Gents
12AM-2:30AM $45, $40 adv.
contact (301)459-7377

MANHUNT II-"HUNTING"
The Edge, 56 L St. SW
New York Style DJ
9PM-Until $12
contact (202)610-EDGE

Sunday, May 25

BLACK PRIDE PRAYER BREAKFAST
9AM-11AM
contact (202) 722-4780

UNITY SPIRITUAL CELEBRATION
Licoln Temple, 11th & R St. NW
1:30PM Free
contact (301)899-1210

BLACK PRIDE OUTDOOR FESTIVAL
Banneker Field
12 PM-8 PM $5

HOUSE PARTY UNDER THE TENT
(Rain or Shine)
Danceing, Massages, HIV literature, juice, condoms,fun & games
Banneker Field
Host: Us Helping Us
12 PM-8PM
contact (202)842- 1337

FAMILY UNION-5th ANNUAL JAZZ BRUNCH
Georgia Cafe, 2225 Georgia Ave.
12PM-4PM $11.95, $3 add./unlimited champagne
Host:Greg Hutchings
(202) 543-7903

THE SPRING AFFAIR-7th Annual
Courtyard of Galleria at Lafayette Centre
1155 21st., NW
Host: The Associates
6PM-10PM $40
contact Chris Bates
(202) 722-7718

MANHUNT III-"CATCHER"
Children's Hour Revisited
(In memory of Aundrea Scott)
The Edge, 56 L St. SW
9 PM-Until $12
contact (202) 610-EDGE

AFTER PRIDE PARTY
Hung Jury, 1819 H St. NW
Host:Sophisticated Ladies
9PM-3AM $7
Featuring 'Eniqutiy'
contact (202) 291-7896

PRIDE DANCE PARTY-PART IV
Host:Women In the Life
10PM-3AM
contact (202)667-8078

Monday, May 27

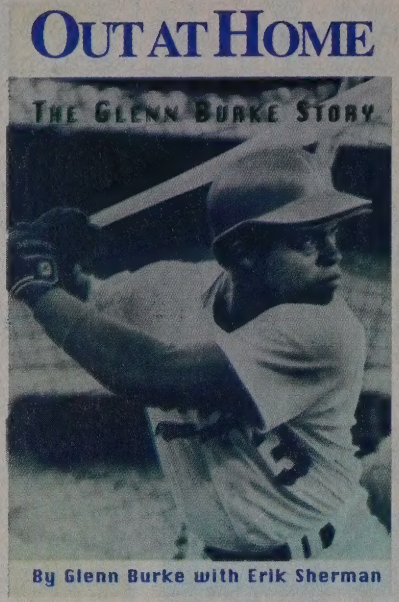
ANNUAL LARRY SPIVEY PICNIC
Rock Creek Park,Lot 23 & 24
10AM-sunset, Free
contact (202)543-7903

MANHUNT-"RELEASE"
The Exotic Dancer Show & Dance
The EDGE, 56 L St. SW
8PM-Until
contact (202) 610-EDGE

ANN NESBY LIVE IN CONCERT
8pm, $35
Crampton Auditorium
Howard University Campus
(See inside cover)

BOOKS...

Out at Home: The Glenn Burke Story by Glenn Burke with Erik Sherman (Excel Publishing, 1995)



Run! Do not walk to your nearest bookstore to pick up your copy of this excellent biography. Talk about your boy of summer. The late Glenn Burke was a former centerfielder with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Oakland A's. He made history by painfully announcing that he was gay. For a major baseball star to do this was astonishing and heart-rendering because the admission came on the heels of his also disclosing his dying of AIDS. Baseball, long known for its racism and high testosterone levels, suffers a double whammy, because of its intolerance to color and sexual orientation. To be black and gay, whoa! No wonder Glenn Burke was blackballed from the game he loved so much. You'll weep at the end of the novel because of the brutal honesty and feeling that fills the 117 pages.

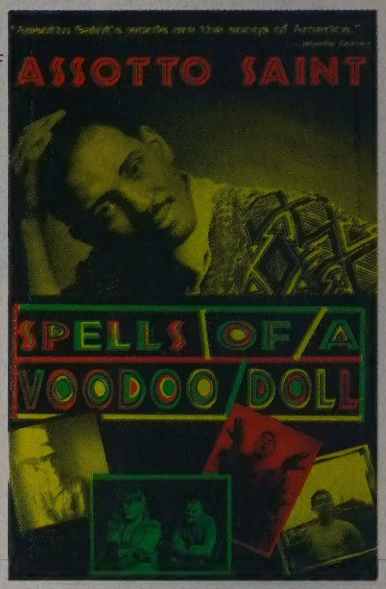
Does Your Mama Know?

Lisa C. Moore (Redbone Press, 1997)

This funny, passionate, angry and joyous collection of 49 short stories, poems, interviews and essays, (fiction and nonfiction) is edited by Moore, founder of Redbone Press in Atlanta, GA. Contributors include Jewelle Gomez, Terri Jewell, and Shay Youngblood. A powerful collection of original and new writing by 41 women, this book is ready to take its place in the halls of literary African-American lesbian voices.

Spells of a Voodoo Doll:

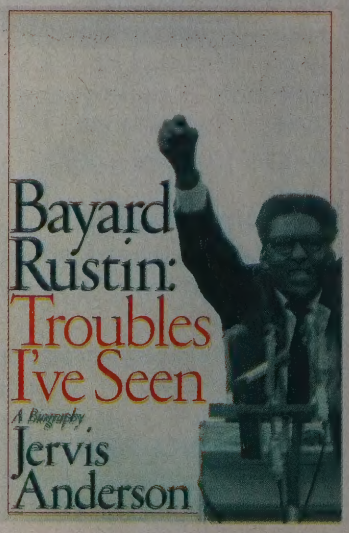
The Poems, Fiction, Essays, and Plays of Assotto Saint (Masquerade Books, 1996)



This volume was published shortly after the writer, performer, and AIDS activist died from complications of AIDS in June 1994. Some of the material published has been previously anthologized in "Other Countries: Black Gay Voices, In The Life: A Black Gay Anthology, and Sojourner: Black Gay Voices in the Age of AIDS." Assotto Saint wrote that most revolutions - be they political, social, spiritual, or economic, are usually complemented by one in literature. This collection is an extension of who Assotto was; a man with a message and a mission. His vast works are representative of what caused him to hurt and to heal. The anthology is testimony to his goal of triumph and hope.

Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen

A Biography by Jervis Anderson (Harpers Collins, 1997)



All history buffs please add this book to your collection. Jervis Anderson, the biographer of A. Phillip Randolph, gives us a glimpse into the life and battles of this black gay spokesman for several civil rights organizations. Bayard Rustin did not have to use his sexual orientation to organize the March on Washington or draw up the original plan for the SCLC. An activist all his life, Bayard Rustin's life reads as a who's who and all the important details of what makes a man, makes for a terrific read.
moves the human spirit, by all means, sit back and read.

THEATRE...

Fringe Dwellers Get Their 'Props' in 'Rent'

by Steve Langley

If you're a Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual, Black-White-Latino HIV-positive cross-dressing homeless artist in recovery who has never seen yourself accurately portrayed on stage in all your unique complexity, run...run see "Rent", the award-winning, hit Broadway musical.

If you're not, see it anyway.

All these identities are celebrated through the myriad of gutsy, fiercely talented young actor-singers who bring life to this powerful, electrifying work. "Rent", based on the Puccini opera "La Boheme," chronicles the lives of young artists on New York's Lower East Side struggling to pay rent and keep body and soul together.

Two interracial Gay couples play pivotal roles. Love blossoms between Tom, a lanky, handsome Black college professor, and Angel, a diminutive Hispanic drag queen and street drummer. Their relationship becomes the model for the other characters.

Maureen and Joanne, however, are in trouble, mainly because Maureen, a White performance artist, is a philandering fly girl while her partner, an African-American attorney, is more grounded.

Playwright Jonathan Larson cleverly challenges our assumptions by making the male couple stable while the female pair wrestles over issues of fidelity.

The HIV/AIDS virus plays a key role, too, threatening lives already teetering on the edge. Giving this production added poignancy is the fact that Larson, at age 35, died suddenly of a ruptured artery days before the play premiered in January. Before his death , Larson, who was heterosexual, described his angry, idealist, touching play simply as a story "about a community celebrating life in the face of AIDS at the turn of the century."

Warning to Wilson: DON'T Even Go There

Prolific playwright August Wilson pimp-slapped the theater world last year when he argued, among other things, that Black actors should only play roles written for Black characters.

In a debate with critic Robert Brustein at New York's Town Hall in January, Wilson was asked whether this meant Gay actors should only play Gay roles. Wilson paused, but before he could answer, a voice rang out from the audience: "Don't touch it."

He didn't.

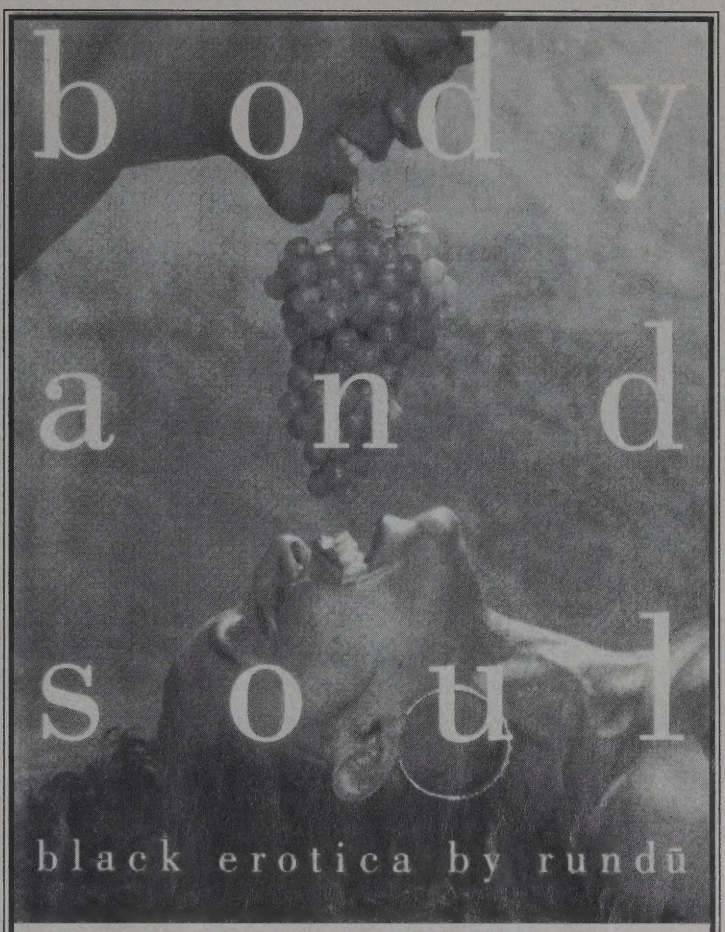
Filling in the Blanks On Wolfe Documentary

Washington Post reporter Ester Iverem felt there was much missing from a documentary she previewed on George C. Wolfe, director of Broadway hits "Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk," "Angels in America," and his own musical "Jelly's Last Jam."

"The 42-year-old live wire of a man," she writes, "...doesn't open up much–about his joys, sorrows, fears, disappointments or failures. He doesn't talk about being a black gay man."

If Wolfe isn't out already, he is now–at least to the hundreds of thousands who may have read the preview in February.

Reviews Continued on page 31



BODY AND SOUL

By Rundu Staggers

Published by Crown Publishers, 1996

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NEWS&NOTES

GET THE 411

Continued from page 19

cially recognized categories of hate crimes information to be documented by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Also, the Department of Justice must be allowed to have the authority to intervene where harassment and violence are directed at the lesbian and gay community," asserted McKinney, "...as it now stands, the F.B.I. has the authority to intervene on investigations such as the burning of African-American churches, however, they do not have the authority to assist in investigations where harassment and violence are directed at the lesbian and gay community, this must change."

"Unless and until we as an open society clearly state that hate crimes against religious minorities, racial minorities, women, free-thinking citizens and lesbians and gays are unacceptable, such bombing will continue," cautioned McKinney.

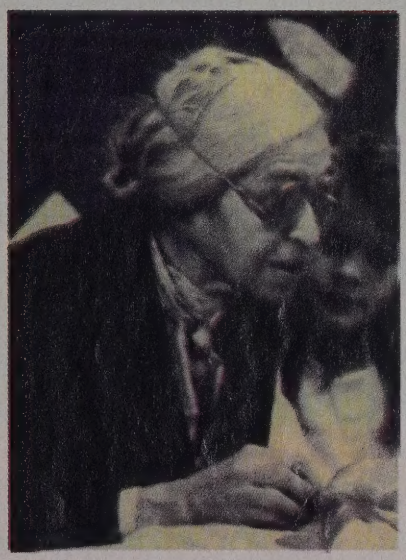
CHICAGO BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS STORM AIDS WALK BOARD MEETING

Chicago-More than 30 people of color representing the black, Latino, and Asian lesbian, gay and straight communities of HIV/AIDS providers attended the most recent meeting of the Chicago AIDS Walk Board of Directors. "There are several issues that concern us about the AIDS Walk," said Renae Ogletree, co-chair of Chicago Black Lesbians and Gays (CBLG). "One is equity in terms of how resources from the AIDS Walk get distributed. The other issue is whether the AIDS Walk's existing structure really allows itself to adjust to the trends and the shifts that we've seen of the virus."

Ogletree explains that the AIDS Walk Board has a conflict of interest in not changing its bylaws to expand the number of Walk partners because then each partner would receive less money.
However, AIDS Walk board chair Cathy Christeller emphasized "the AIDS Walk was never set up as a grantmaking body." Christeller says that the Walk's bylaws are fair because the founding agencies came up with the initial investment for the Walk, long before the event became profitable.
But Ogletree maintains that "the AIDS Walk is the proper arena to address city-wide HIV needs precisely because it is marketed as an event to address the AIDS epidemic, not as a mechanism to enable the founding agencies to fulfill their mission statements. The AIDS Walk has grown to be such a huge fundraising entity in the city that it literally strangles the ability for grassroots organizations to do any fundraising around the epidemic" said Ogletree.

BLACK CHURCHES TO DISPLAY AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT

New York-In an effort to educate African-Americans about HIV and AIDS, a new program helps black churches display the AIDS Memorial Quilt and create panels for the Quilt commemorating the lives of black people who have died from the disease. Entitled "And Their Living Shall Not Be In Vain", the new program is sponsored by the Balm in Gilead, New York City and the Names Project Foundation, San Francisco.



Civil Rights Legend, Rosa Parks, Works on a Panel of the AIDS Quilt

"Displaying the Quilt provides black churches the opportunity to hold worship services and educational programs about HIV prevention, treatment and providing compassionate care for families affected by the disease," said Pernessa C. Seele, founder and CEO of Balm in Gilead. Churches becoming certified partners of the Balm in Gilead can receive a portion of the Quilt at no charge along with supporting guides and materials.

The Balm in Gilead organizes the annual Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, yearly beginning the first Sunday in March, and provides HIV/AIDS educational and theological resources designed specifically for use by black churches. For more information, call the Balm in Gilead at (212) 730-7381

PEOPLE MAKE PRIDE HAPPEN

Volunteer Sign Up Party May 4th

- PARADE MARSHALS 100
- SECURITY VOLUNTEERS 100
- MERCHANDISE SALES 25
- ADVERTISING SALES 10
- FOOD & BEVERAGE 300
- FIRST AID 100
- STAGE CREW 25
- DONATIONS 100
- BOARD MEMBERS 15
- OPERATIONS TEAM 45

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WHY DOES IT ALWAYS SEEM TO BE:

Time and Money

Fourth Tuesday

Spring Fling '97

tasty food
dancing
groovy door prizes

An annual benefit for
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founded in honor of JoAnn Loulan.

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May 3, 1997
Atlanta Botanical Garden
7 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Tickets available at:
Charis
Outwrite
Brushstrokes
Lazer Age

Erykah Badu

Continued from page 27

An old soul with a hypnotic flow, Erykah Badu's voice is capable of stirring the deepest emotions. Setting small fires, if you will. Her poised debut Baduizm plunges deep into the essence of the best of Black music. That magical moment in musical history when Marvin (whose picture she carries with her always) and Curtis Mayfield were laying it down. She uses the mic like a camera, creating stills of the intimate moments that frame her generation. Because we worship Billie Holiday, whisper her name with quiet reverence, it is no small thing to name her successor. The natural response is to be skeptical. But once you feel the vibration from the timbre of Badu's voice, you will understand immediately this is no marketing ploy. In fact, a comparison to Billie could bear weight that no new singer would want to inherit. Because Erykah Badu came to know Billie's music later in life, in college–had actually grown up listening to soul by Stevie Wonder and Niecey Williams–the visitation from the jazz diva's spirit was virtually uneventful. She just opened her mouth to sing and out it flew. "People have always told me that I sound like Billie, that my phrasing is reminiscent of hers: It's the highest compliment. But it's not something I try to do," says Badu.

Trained as a dancer, Badu spent her high school days rhyming and as a poet who loves to act. "I just need to perform. It's in my blood." She attended Dallas' prestigious School of Arts Magnet High whose alumnus include prodigy jazz trumpeter Roy Hargrove. "Back then I was known as MC Apple." And while she's got Southern grace and honey coated intonations, she grew up on hip-hop. Loved it fiercely.

One imagines the 21st century as a place where brand new 'old souls' will discover Baduizm, over and over again. Her voice ripe with history and resonant with willfulness, Erykah Badu's legacy will undoubtedly survive.

The Seventh Annual Black Lesbian & Gay Pride Weekend
May 22 - 26, 1997 Washington, D.C

Don't miss the biggest Black Pride experience in the world!!!

Thursday, May 22, 1997
- ▼ City-Wide Welcoming Parties
- ▼ Official Pride Party @ the Circle

Friday, May 23, 1997
- ▼ Opening Reception $25
- ▼ Moonlight Cruise $40
  (Aboard the Spirit of Washington featuring 2 DJ's on 2 climate controlled levels, live entertainment, Viewing deck lavish buffet, cash bar)
- ▼ Kick off Party at the Edge $10

Saturday, May 24, 1997
- ▼ Jazz Brunch $15 *
- ▼ Cultural, Film, Health Festival $10
- ▼ Black Pride Women's Party $10
- ▼ AIDS / Cancer Candlelight Vigil Free
- ▼ Party at the Delta $10

Sunday, May 25, 1997
- ▼ Prayer Breakfast Free
- ▼ Jazz Brunch $15 *
- ▼ Main Event (Advance Sales Required) $ 5
- ▼ Unity Social @ the Circle $ 5

***Weekend Passes Includes Only One Jazz Brunch, Designate Saturday or Sunday**

Buy The Early Bird Special Before April 15, 1997 $ 60.00 Weekend Pass
And Attend All Official Black Pride Events

Make checks payable to BLGPD, Inc. P.O. Box 77071 Washington, D.C. 20013-7071

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Visit our Website Http://members.aol.comm/dcblkpride.home.html Email - dcblkpride@aol.com

Host Hotel - Radisson-Barcelo 1-800-333-3333 *ask for the Black Pride Special*

BLACK LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE DAY, INC. (BLGPD)
ASSISTING HIV/AIDS ORGANIZATIONS SERVING THE BLACK COMMUNITY

C L A S S I F I E D S

SUBMISSION CALL

ANTHOLOGY-Accepting Non-Fiction writings by African-Americans who have relocated to the state of Georgia.Whether it is for the first time or returning home. Please send thirty pages or less, double-spaced, telling what led you to embrace the Georgia Peach state. Send a S.A.S.E. (self-addressed stamped envelope) for submission guidelines TO: "BACK TO THE FOLKS" P.O. Box 451866, Los Angeles, CA 90045

GEMS publishing is calling for submissions about Positive Gay and Lesbian Relationships Among People of Color. Publishing date: fall of 1997, long term relationships meaning 1 year or more. For general questions please call (954) 463-1997. To request Information Package, send your name and complete mailing address to:GEMS Publishing 1636 North West Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale, FDlorida 33311

The ADODI Muse of Atlanta is seeking Black, Gay male writers to participate in the rebirth of a writers collective. For information contact Malik M.L. Williams 404-570-7841,(vm).

SUPPORT

SINGLE LESBIANS CONSIDERING PARENTING

Single lesbians from all backgrounds considering parenting and seeking support in the process: an informal group has just begun meeting in Atlanta to share support and information. Join us! Call Tovah for more information 404-373-8692

Atlanta Lesbian Cancer Initiative

A support group for lesbians with cancer is open to any lesbian with cancer and her partner. Facilitators for the group are Cheryl Strong, a National Board certified counselor and Linda McGehee, a certified advanced practice nurse in psychiatric-mental health. If you or anyone you know could benefit from the group please contact us at 404.651.2866. Your suggestions, comments or questions are welcomed on how we can get the word out to more lesbians of color.

Maby Baby

Every 2nd & 4th Saturday each month. Information on artificial insemination, adoption and parenting for gays & lesbians. Atlanta Gay & & Lesbian Center, 71 12th St. 404-876-5372

OPPORTUNITIES

NATIONAL AD SALES REP

Nationally distributed start-up publication is seeking highly motivated & very independent individual with minimum 2 years display advertising sales experience and a desire to make attractive commissions. Fax resume to 404-755-9587 or mail to PO Box 89238 Atlanta, Ga 30312.

Customer Support Rep I

Responsible for answering incoming calls, scheduling and arranging medical appointments for recipients. Applicant must type at least 35 wpm, as well as possess clerical skills. Experience in working with the general public is a plus. Contact Darryl Winston, Marshall Newsome Enterprises, (770) 907-5713.

Assistant to the CEO

Responsible for providing administrative support to the CEO. Assist in training staff and the implementation of Companies goals and objective. Accompany Chief executive officer to various functions and business related matters. Must have a minimum degree in Business Administration or Management related area. Strong leadership skills a plus. Contact Darryl Winston, Marshall Newsome Enterprises, (770) 907-5713.

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check out our site at www.studio8prod.com
or call or fax 404.325.3473

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Project Open Hand is an Atlanta based non-profit meals on wheels program for people with AIDS. We are currently in need of volunteer delivery drivers and kitchen volunteers. For more information please call Michael or Anneliese at 404.872.2707.ASP Orientations.

TRAVEL

BLACK GAY CRUISE

The men of Atlanta invite all men and women to sale this Labor Day, August 29-Sept. 1, on a 3 night cruise to the Bahamas. Web site: www.netcom.com/~mrlanta/black-cruise.html
E-mail: mrlanta@netcom.com
Contact Levi Ray Johnson 404/869-0074

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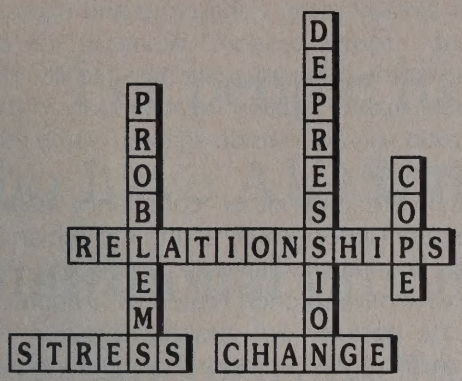
When Life Becomes a Puzzle...



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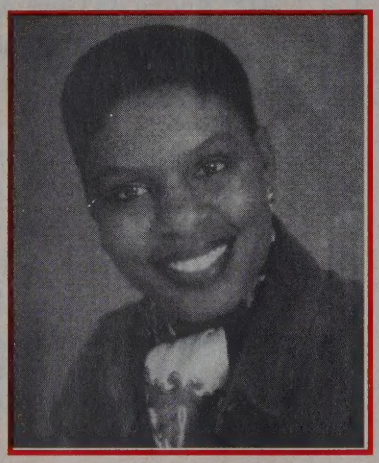
A Letter to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Dorinda G. Henry

My Dearest Martin:

It is indeed with a great deal of pain and frustration that I write this letter to you. It's been 29 years since your death and I hate to say it, Martin, but not much has changed. I would have preferred to tell you that there had been no more wars and that people are as concerned for and about their fellow man as they are for themselves. Instead, we have the attitude that, "It's me against you, at all cost." I would love to tell you that they finally found a cure for breast cancer and a deadly disease called AIDS never happened, or that it can be cured with a vaccine. Remember those bombs that exploded over in Vietnam? Well, they are now exploding in our own backyards, as you so prophetically foretold. The drugs and gangs are taking over our neighborhoods and schools, claiming the lives of babies who will never know your name. The church, which was the bedrock of the African American community, has forgotten its purpose and the welcome mat into America has been racially and economically pulled from under the feet of immigrants.



You lived your days as a man of God. You were a man of peace, full of integrity and hope for a better and brighter tomorrow. When you left us, some people tried to step into your shoes. They did not recognize and understand the responsibility and accountability that comes with walking in the Light. We as a people, as a nation have paid the price for those who were ill suited to replace you.

Before I go any further, let me say, that, I am an African American, a woman and a lesbian. Clearly three separate groups of people rolled up into one perfect image of God. Separately, they have benefited a great deal from your life and legacy. Together, however, they pose a new set of problems. On the one hand, this country has made it illegal to discriminate against me on the basis of race or gender. On the other hand, that lesbian side of me is not protected under federal anti-discrimination laws. Herein lies the problem, Martin. As a African American, I have no choice but to be aware of the injustices, inadequacies and the disparity of treatment, based on race, relating to African American people; a privilege I don't share with my white counterparts. When such violations take place, I am not only compelled to act and react, but without exception, I have a responsibility to bring such violations to light. This, in the lesbian and gay community, has earned me the title of "trouble maker."

When the lesbian and gay community - where racial arrogance has been excused as racial ignorance - consistently engage in racist behavior and activity with impunity, "trouble," is already there. I challenge and expose it. You called that, "creative tension." Whatever the case may be, this is not the politically polite thing to do. Thus, the title, "trouble maker." A title I wear proudly in that I believe they called you an "outside agitator," same thing. I'm in good company.

I suppose I, like some other "community leaders," could have written a letter, politely asking the lesbian and gay community to, "recommit" itself, "to helping those who have so often helped us." I appreciate the gesture, but strongly question their method. The authors chose the weekend of the federally sanctioned celebration of your birthday to submit this letter and yet, I don't believe that you would have been terribly impressed. If only they themselves had taken the time to get acquainted with you and read your words, studied your methodology and your mission, they would have known better.

Unfortunately, there was no mention of the fact that just two years ago, the lesbian and gay community plastered posters and fliers across this city and this nation exploiting your image and your words for their own selfish monolithic cause. The threat against their fight for civil rights seems to have subsided for the time being and surprisingly, Martin, so has the community's interest in you. Like a dirty dishrag, they seem to have thrown you away. Anger should have been their motive. Sadly though, that does not come through.

I wish I could say that the lack of regard and proper respect due to you, rests entirely on the lesbian and gay community, but I cannot. African Americans, women and communities of color appear to have misinterpreted your mission as well. They have turned the celebration of your life into a "made for television" parade of the "who's who."

Martin, I'm sorry that I had no better news for you, but this is the state of the world today. The socio-political, racial and economic problems of yesterday remain to be the problems of today. I fear that we are headed toward another unpreventable chasm, filled with too many monologues, not enough dialogue, and ultimately, misguided violence. This time, however, we won't have a Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Let me close by saying, I thank God for you, Martin. Because of you, we have a sense of how things should and could be if we as a nation heeded your words. I send this letter to you with all the love, honor and respect that you deserve. Most importantly, Martin, I send it filled with sunny skies, beautiful orange and red sunsets, purifying rains and thunderous reminders filled with faith and hope of a better and brighter tomorrow.

I miss you Martin,
Dorinda G. Henry

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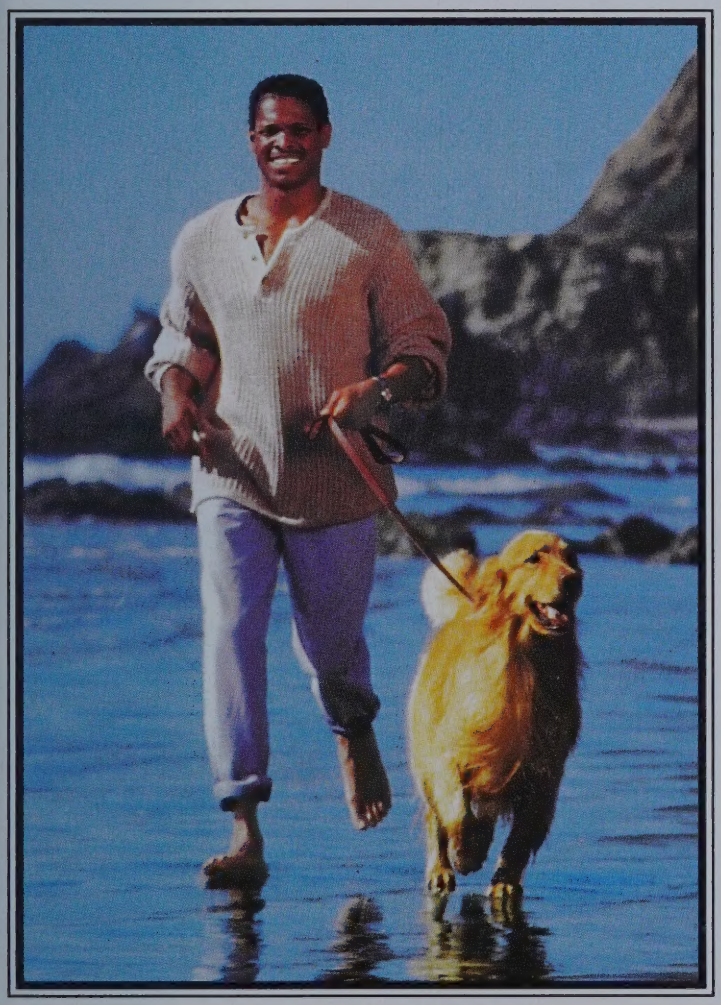

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